

C L I O: 7
OR, A
DISCOURSE
ON
T A S T E.

ADDRESSED TO A YOUNG LADY.

*by J Mathew - in several
subsequent Editions
1771*

By L. ~~Usher~~.

The SECOND EDITION,
With large ADDITIONS.

L O N D O N,
Printed for T. DAVIES, in Russel-street,
Covent-Garden. M D C C L X I X,

True Taste is sure the gift of Heav'n;
(The seeds at least by Nature giv'n.)
A Relish for the nobler Arts;
Allied to Genius, and great parts.
A Feeling exquisitely fine; —

Or call it strong Imagination,
Matur'd by Reason's cultivation.
A powerful Instinct in the Soul,
Which Discipline must well controul,
(Graves.)
Doctrina vim promovet insitam.

— * — — — —
"Taste is a compound Idea;
compounded of Judgment & feeling."



P R E F A C E.

FROM the time Mr. Locke proved that there were no innate principles, or rules to direct the actions of men, imprinted on the mind, taste, morality, and conscience were supposed by many persons of learning, particularly by all the consistent followers of the modern philosophy, to have no determined foundation in nature, but custom, or else the apparent interests of men, discovered by investigation and comparison of effects. There appeared in that philosophy but one common first motive, or source of

determination and action to man and brute ; and the human divine mind was only considered, as endued with a greater capacity, or with a superiority in degree, but not in kind. Of these consequences, scepticism, infidelity, and materialism, made advantages, which probably Mr. Locke did not foresee ; or could not, consistent with his general hypothesis, avoid.

Although it be demonstrable, that man has no innate rules of actions imprinted on his memory, yet can we agree, that he has no innate feeling of the sacred character of truth and rectitude of heart, no sense of beauty, no infelt distinction between the base and the generous, which ought by philosophers to be substituted to the innate principles which Mr. Locke
justly

P R E F A C E.

v

justly discarded? The uniformity of the judgments of mankind throughout all ages, and the strong involuntary sentiments we all feel in the presence of virtue and beauty, prove that we have some standard of approbation in the mind; and that for want of acknowledging it publickly, there is an *hiatus* or chasm left in philosophy, thro' which infidelity, ever restless, and ever seeking for security, creeps into seeming safety and peace.

In the following lines, I attempt to shew several tastes that grow up with the human mind, and are found in every part of the species that are not evidently imperfect. To this general proposition in the first edition of *Clio*, was objected, *The variety of mens opinions and tastes*, copyed from Locke and

Mandeville, in order to prove that men have no fixed taste or direction of mind. The critic evidently had not an idea of the nature of evidence or proof, for even allowing his exceptions to be good, he ought only to conclude that there were limits to the natural tastes of men; for indisputably if the instances I produced of taste be universal, then mankind have so far a fixed universal taste. The method, and indeed the only method of overturning my position is, to shew that the instances I produce of universal taste are not in truth common to all ages and nations; or that, although they be universal, yet that men came by some other means to agree to them, and not by mere natural sentiment.

The

P R E F A C E. vii

The objection I just mentioned, obliged me in this edition to make the distinction between things that please us by their native beauty, and those other objects that are naturally indifferent or disgusting ; and yet that come into value and reputation on account of an association they happen to be in with original beauty. I will take this opportunity of adding a reflection or two, to what is said on this subject in the body of the work. The partition made by this distinction obviously accounts for, and reconciles, the remarkable steadfastness of the judgments of men in all ages in some matters, and the strange fluctuation in their judgments concerning other matters. Objects possessed of native or unborrowed beauty taken separately, always please us, while our organs are

not indisposed; but the esteem men sometimes have for things naturally indifferent or disgusting, is only accidental, ~~and~~ their judgments concerning them must change, as the mode or fashion of association varies. The original cause of uniting ideas that are found so closely connected as not to be easily separated, is often unknown; ~~and~~ in such case, people are astray about the principle that guides their preferences. If we could trace the beginnings of associations, we should no doubt be able to point out the means by which the several fantastic modes of beauty came into esteem, as clearly as persons acquainted with history can tell us, why a neck a little awry was graceful in the camp of Alexander, and why a prominent hoop-petticoat was a genteel part of dress

P R E F A C E. ix

dress in the court of our virgin Elizabeth.

Now, if agreeable to the import of this little discourse, man without innate principles or rules of action imprinted on the mind, be enlightened and directed by innate sentiments, or intellectual tastes, then he has some fixed boundaries of judgment, some spring-heads of reasoning; he is singled out and distinguished from the brute by something more than mere capacity; he is born to involuntary approbations and duties, and the important philosophy of human nature hath a settled firm foundation. I thought proper to mention this consequence, that the matter here presented to the public may be discussed with the attention and accuracy it deserves: my
general

general view is, that the human mind after being neglected by the modern philosophy, may be restored to the rank due to its importance in learning, and that this rich and fruitful province may once more become the object of curiosity and enquiring genius.

I added the dialogue at the end, because I had a mind to make some reflections on the influence the Christian religion naturally has on the fine arts, and dialogue admits of rambling thoughts better than any other species of writing. I am sensible, that in a conversation between a gentleman and a lady, witty things are generally expected; but my reader will not find a single *bon mot* in this conversation. The Dean has no character, but that of a man who has attentively considered

P R E F A C E. xi

dered human nature, and the genius of Christianity ; and Amelia is a lady of a very common character in life ; she is religious, an admirer of virtue, and a lover of liberty. I am not positive that my thoughts on society and religion will not disgust several of my readers ; but let me observe on my own behalf, that I did not write for the croud. I offer my reflections to the few who are willing to bestow a thought now and then on their own minds, and take a sedate view of that picture, which it is the great art of life to hide from ourselves, as well as from the world : if others read them, and take offence, I can't help it. Those who require their passions to be flattered, may very well throw aside this trifle ; they have labourers enough

at work for them, gentle authors, who politely consider the humour of the public before they write, and never put pen to paper before they calculate the number of their buyers.

I have nothing to add about the execution of the work, but to acknowledge its faults and imperfections : it is often obscure, either thro' brevity or an ill choice of expression. The parts were wrote separate and loose, and they remain so still ; they appear yet to be only materials collected and thrown rudely together ; consequently they leave not on the mind the full strong impresson of a single whole and regular plan. If I be asked why I did not digest them better ? I answer, that I am not obliged to do so, while I
have

P R E F A C E.

xiii

have other objects that require my time and attention. However imperfect this little piece be, I think it of some value, which is a sufficient apology for publishing it. If I lay open my fields, I am not bound to improve them, although improvements would add considerably to the pleasure of the walk, and to the variety of the prospect

CON.

vid: p. 54th

Below her chin ^{be sure to deck} ~~her polished Neck~~
 With every grace her polished Neck,
 While all that's pretty, soft, and sweet,
 In the swelling Bosom meet.

Let her Lips Persuasion wear
 In Silence elegantly fair. (ibid)

Anthol: B. 7th

Pisidos SOPA. "Lips full of Grace." Psal.

A Man that has a Taste - in Music,
 - Painting, - or - Architecture, - is like one
 that has - another Sense, - when compar-
 - ed with such - as have - no Relish of
 those Arts. - Addison. —

CONTENTS.

	Page
I. T ASTE defined	2
II. Particular instances of universal taste	5 to 14
III. The confusion of men in their judgments of the beauty and excellence of the works of art and nature considered and accounted for	14 to 36
IV. Why the common people are not grace- ful, although the graceful and becoming are always natural	38 to 45
V. Thoughts on elegance	45 to 74
VI. ——— on personal beauty	74 to 83
VII. ——— on conversation	83 to 91
VIII. ——— on writing	91 to 149
IX. ——— on music	149 to 1
X. ——— on sculpture and paint- ing	156 to 164
XI. ——— on architecture	164
XII. Thoughts	

CONTENTS.

XII. <i>Thoughts on colours and light</i>	165 to 167
XIII. ——— <i>on uniformity</i>	167 to 170
XIV. ——— <i>on novelty</i>	170 to 171
XV. ——— <i>on the origin of our general ideas of beauty</i>	172 to 177
XVI. <i>Sense, taste, and genius distin- guished</i>	177 to 184
XVII. <i>Thoughts on the human capa- city</i>	184 to 186
XVIII. <i>Taste, how depraved and lost</i>	186 to 188
XIX. <i>Some reflections on the human mind</i>	188 to 193
XX. <i>Relation of the fine arts to the human mind</i>	194 to 201
XXI. <i>An attempt to account for the rise of the fine arts in Greece</i>	201 to 215
XXII. <i>The object of the fine arts not in this life</i>	215 to 230
XXIII. <i>Influence of Christianity, and of in- fidelity on the fine arts</i>	230 to 246

C L I O :
OR, A
DISCOURSE on TASTE.

MADAM,

WHEN I had the honour of drinking tea with you a few days ago, and occasionally read to you Rollin's General Reflections upon what is called Good Taste, some observations you made brought on a very lively and pleasing conversation, in which you opened so many new prospects to me upon our subject, that I had thoughts of reducing my ideas to writing while they continued fresh in my memory, and you were pleased to approve of that design. Rollin, you observed, wrote for young students, and his principal view was to form a taste for literature.

Introduction.

B

*Taste,
and
Elegance*

terature. You very gracefully, but in a manner I did not then perceive, led me to that taste and elegance which distinguishes persons politely educated, and particularly to the graces of your own sex: the transition, indeed, from the beauties of writing to the elegance and propriety displayed in polished life, was not great: for the same simple original principles of taste are common to both, and are varied only according to characters and their situations. It is a happy circumstance in my favour, that the subject itself, and your approbation of my attempt, confine my thoughts to you; I have no necessity, madam, of invoking a muse to inspire me.

*I
Define
-tion
of.*

The taste we spoke of may be defined, at large, a clear sense of the noble, the beautiful, and the affecting, through nature and art. It distinguishes and selects, with unerring judgment, what is fine and graceful, from the mean and disgusting;

and

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 3

and keeping a strict and attentive eye on nature, never neglects her, but when nature herself is in disgrace.

All our species that are perfect bring the first principles of taste with them into the world. Rollin produces instances of universal taste in music and painting: "A concert, says he, that has all its parts well composed and well executed, both as to instruments and voices, pleases universally: but if any discord arises, any ill tone of voice be intermixed, it shall displease even those who are absolutely ignorant of music. They know not what it is that offends them, but they find something grating in it to their ears; and this proceeds from the taste and sense of harmony implanted in them by nature. In like manner a fine picture charms and transports a spectator who has no idea of painting. Ask him what pleases him, and why it pleases him, and he cannot easily

Instan.

nces of

unover.

521

Taste

in

Music

and

Painting

from

Rollin

„ give an account, or specify the real reason ; but natural sentiment works almost the same effect in him, as art and use in perfect judges.”

Here you stopped me with a very subtle and confounding objection, which became much stronger by your familiar and sprightly manner of supporting it : though I did not then make a good figure in opposition to you, yet now I can venture upon paper to enforce the principle

Objection I defended. Your objection was, That whatever pleases people forms to them a true and agreeable taste ; and that therefore there is no such thing as universal taste in the beautiful, the sublime, and the affecting ; for that which pleases one person is often displeasing to another : who then can pretend to judge between mankind, since no sentence pronounced in this case can alter the tastes of men, or make that agreeable to a person which dis-

No such thing as Universal Taste.

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 5

disgusts him, or the contrary? Though this objection be certainly new from you, who have yet no acquaintance with books that treat on the nature of the human mind; yet it has often been made, very triumphantly, by writers of the greatest reputation, and seems to require a more satisfactory solution than has hitherto appeared. It is no small advantage to me, that the candour of your mind is not destroyed by what is often called learning. When I produce to you several well-known instances of universal invariable beauty, you will without hesitation agree with me, that there is such a thing: you will not contend, that mankind want a taste for that which they all admire.

*Solution
particular
instances
of the
sense
of*

To proceed to particular instances of this natural sense: Every man, who is not an idiot, has a taste for truth; the most notorious liar on earth, when taken in a

*II
Beauty
in*

Truth.

falsehood which he hopes to evade, shall convince you of his own private unalterable sense by his palliations and excuses.

*in
Grate-
tude.*

The same thing may be said of gratitude; and though the virtue itself be rare, yet no one ever in earnest acknowledged himself to be ungrateful, or would willingly bear that imputation; which is sufficient evidence that the approbation of the virtue is universal.

*in
Genero-
sity*

The applause we yield to generosity, and our contempt of a very selfish disposition, is not less general, though there seem to be some objections. Misers have been known to praise as well as practise the most fordid parsimony, and to condemn generosity; but I believe, upon considering this matter closely, it will appear that misers, as well as others, have a sense of the merit of generosity; and find fault with it in others only where it affects

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 7

affects nearly or remotely their own interests, or becomes a reproach to them: they condemn liberality where it appears to them to lavish beyond proper limits. The miser admits the virtue equally with the generous, but his fears and suspicions of future want make him confine it within a small compass: he parts with his farthing where a more generous person bestows a shilling or a guinea; yet this farthing extorted from him, is an indubitable proof that he has fixed a sense of liberality, though it be restrained by some mean and selfish considerations.

Liberty is pleasing, and confinement
disgustful to every body. You can walk
and breathe freely under a low cieling,
what then makes you prefer a loftier
chamber? What makes you, if the wea-
ther permit, like the open air best, and
chuse to be bounded only by the horizon,

*in
Liberty*

that extends in prospect as far as the eye can reach?

in Novelty. Novelty also hath its charms in a thousand instances, that wear away by familiarity.

in true Wit. All ages and nations have agreed to admire true wit; it is certain that witticism, pun, mimickry, and buffoonery, have very often supplied the place of it with applause; but when we consider, that all people who make use of false wit, notwithstanding admire the true, and approve of it; that they put off the false wit always under some resemblance or appearance of real wit; and that those who like it are imposed upon just as men are who take counterfeit coin, because it has the same impression with good money; and when we further observe, that those very people who use false wit, as they improve in their taste and sense despise the false
and

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 9

and adopt the true; and that nothing fixes them in a habit of punning and buffoonery, but an incurable stupidity, and an inability to act a higher part; we shall be obliged to confess, that true wit hath its boundaries and marks which for ever distinguish it.

I shall be obliged to say something *in* of our sense of personal beauty hereafter; I shall here content myself with *perso-* making the following observation: A *-nal* perfect beauty always holds the superi- *Beauty* ority in the esteem of every one, over remarkable deformity. It is only when the degrees from deformity to beauty ap- *confu-* proach to each other, or when beauties of *-sion* different kinds are compared who hold *concerning* nearly the same degree, that we are con- *it cause* fused and differ in opinion. The same *of: —* confusion happens in our taste of sweet and bitter; if the sweets approach each other, we cannot readily determine: but

but as beauty is composed of various principles, and is more complicated, we are proportionably in greater confusion in our comparisons when the variations are not very remarkable.

*Great-
ness of
Thought.*

Grandeur of thought, or grandeur of objects, strike us irresistibly with surprize and delight. The Grecian and Roman

histories abound with splendid instances of greatness of soul ; but I have no need to take you from your favourite poet Homer on this head, whose Iliad is a continued series of elevating sentiments, and of sublime images that force our admiration.

*Great-
ness in
visible
Objects.*

Visible objects of grandeur have a similar effect : a large river that throws itself down a precipice with unceasing violence and thunder, never fails to raise a pleasing astonishment in the beholders. A summer's evening sky cast over with lofty and irregular clouds, dipped in purple and gold, the ocean in storms, and a broken prospect

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 11

prospect of rocks and mountains irregularly piled, affect the mind in the same manner.

However certain what I have been just saying may be, let us stop here, and suppose that I have been entirely mistaken; let us suppose that there are some men created without those original tastes, or having the very opposite; that there are men who have a natural taste and approbation of falsehood and ingratitude; who think a mean and sordid disposition to be meritorious; ~~and~~ who disesteem grandeur and generosity of soul: do you not observe, that you suppose them, by their very natures and dispositions, the most contemptible, and debased animals on earth? Who, say you, shall judge in this case, between such persons and ourselves, since they have their beauty and their taste, as well as we; and the difference is, that they judge things to be agreeable,

which

*Absur-
-dity
of the
contrary
Hypothesis*

*Intrin-
sic V2.
due of
some
Virtues,
2nd
vice
vers2.
probable
reason
of*

which we judge to be the contrary. But is it not evident, madam, by the very light of sentiment, that it is not upon the judgment, or opinions, concerning them, that the merit of truth, gratitude, and generosity depend; but that they have a real value and worth in themselves, which opinion cannot alter; and that falsehood, ingratitude, and a sordid, mean temper, have a natural baseness, that opinion cannot ennoble. I know no reason for our perception of absolute eternal beauty in the virtues I have mentioned, but by supposing that the Father of being, who is eternal truth and goodness, and the original standard of grandeur and beauty, has stamped on our minds a sense of those absolute and eternal perfections. If opinion were the real standard of sentiment, the nature of one animal could not be more noble than that of any other; yet it is certain, that if there was in the world but one man of integrity, generosity, gratitude,

* To Καλόν, το αγαθόν, το τελειόν. and
First perfect, fair, and good.

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 13

and a great soul, and all the rest of mankind consisted of people who had no sense of the dignity of truth, and of a noble disposition, this single person would be of more worth, than the whole race of man beside.

I know the instances I have just produced of fixed universal taste common to all the sons of Adam, who are not evidently imperfect and void of understanding, are sufficient to convince you that there is such a thing as universal taste in the mind of man; and they will prove decisive to every one who has clear conceptions of the nature of conviction and evidence. But as I know by experience, that there are abundance of plausible and even learned men who seldomer conclude from reason and evidence than they imagine, and that learning is not a certain antidote against the power of prejudice; as I am also aware of the favourite system that

stands

*Reason
of more
detailed
proof
of 2
fixed,
universal
Taste.*

stands in need of the opinion I contend against, and the great names that support it, I am obliged to enter into a debate of a few pages, that I may leave no objection against me unanswered.

III The truth is, in attempting to resolve your difficulty, I find myself caught with-

Different out possibility of retreat, in a dispute of
opinions very old standing, wherein the combatants,
respecting although the greatest philosophers of
it. their respective ages, have generally stood
aloof, and contented themselves with

asserted establishing each his own side of the
by question with strong appearances of truth,
Numbers. without venturing to attack directly the
adverse proofs. The case stands thus: the
croud of those who have reflected on the
sentiments men in all ages entertain of
virtue and vice, of beauty and grandeur of
thought, have, from the uniformity they
discovered in the judgments of mankind
on these heads, concluded that there is

in

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 15

in the human mind, a determined unalterable standard of judgment, or a sense that discovers the right and just in morality, in beauty, and the sublime. On the contrary, Hobbes, Locke, Mandeville, and a cloud of moderns, along with some ancient, observing the different estimates of some particular moral actions in the different communities of mankind, and the unlimited variety of human fancy in the agreeable works of art and nature, have thence contended, that there is no fixed standard in the mind for taste, in morality, or beauty. There is in the opinions of the learned, as Shakespeare says of the fortunes of men, a tide that ebbs and flows without ceasing. At present, Mr. Locke's opinion seems to bear down all opposition; yet several sound reasoners have ventured to call it in question; they find something still in the remarkable uniformity and inflexibility of mens judgments on decent or base actions,

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denied
by many*

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last
opinion
perhaps
at present
prevails*

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*fixed
 unalte.
 -rable
 standard
 in the
 Mind.
 in Poetry,
 Painting
 Statuary,
 paintings
 of Nature
 &c*

on the beautiful and the sublime, that cannot be accounted for but by recurring to a fixed unalterable standard in the mind. To speak in the phrase of some free-thinkers, they perceive by the internal sense, natures and differences that appear as immoveable as fate. The moment they cast an eye on Homer or Milton, on the antient statues, and the paintings of Raphael; or the finer paintings of nature, the flowers, the waving corn, and meadows, a varied prospect, or the sublime beauties of the night, they find all the objections against real beauty baffled, and overwhelmed by intuition. And I fancy the most positive philosophers, who derive our approbations from mode or custom, would hesitate a little, if writers were to be judged by their principles; if they were told that Homer and Martial, Milton and Tom Brown, are on the same footing in real excellency; and that the beauties of the heroic poets

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 17

are not the object of any certain or universal taste in the soul, but of a favourable mode of thinking that casually obtained in the world.

Of all those whom I have to contend with, Mandeville, the author of the Fable of the Bees, makes the closest attack upon intrinsic beauty, and seems to deny, with the greatest plausibility, that there are things possessed of such real worth and excellence, as to be universally esteemed in all countries and ages. As the succeeding writers on his side of the question do little more than copy his objections on this head, I will consider them expressly, and answer at once to the crowd.

“ When we first set out in quest of this intrinsic worth, (says he) and find one thing better than another, and a third better than that, and so on, we begin to entertain great hopes of success; but when we meet with several things that

*Intrinsic
Beauty
plausibly
denied
by Man-
deville*

*His Ob-
jections
quoted.*

different are all very good, or all very bad, we are
opinions, puzzled, and agree not always with our-
2nd tastes selves, much less with others. There are
changing different faults as well as beauties, that,
Beauty as modes and fashions alter, and men
in general vary in their tastes and humours, will
 be differently admired or disapproved of.

In "Judges of painting will never disagree
Painting in opinion, when a fine picture is com-
 pared to the daubing of a novice; but
 how strangely have they differed as to the
 works of eminent masters! There are
 parties amongst connoisseurs, and few of
 them agree in their esteem as to ages and
 countries; and the best pictures bear not
 always the best prices. A noted original
 will be ever worth more than any copy
 that can be made of it by an unknown
 hand, though it should be better. The
 value that is set on paintings depends not
 only on the name of the master, and the
 time of his age he drew them in, but
 likewise,

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 19

likewise, in a greater measure, on the scarcity of his works ; and, what is still more unreasonable, the quality of the persons in whose possession they are, as well as the length of time they have been in great families ; and if the Cartons, now in Hampton-court, were done by a less famous hand than that of Raphael, and had a private person for their owner, who would be forced to sell them, they would never yield the tenth part of the money, which, with all their gross faults, they are now supposed to be worth."——

“ In the works of nature, worth and excellency are as uncertain ; and even in human creatures ; what is beautiful in one country, is not so in another : how whimsical is the florist in his choice ? sometimes the tulip, sometimes the auricula, and at other times the carnation, shall engross his esteem ; and every year ”

*The
works
of Nature,
and hu-
man
creatures*

„ a new flower, in his judgment, exceeds
 „ all the old ones, though it is much infe-
 „ rior to them both in colour and shape.

varieties Three hundred years ago, men were
of Fashions shaved as closely as they are now; since
in that, they have worn beards, and cut them
Beards, in a vast variety of forms, that were all
2nd becoming when fashionable, as now they
Dress. would be ridiculous. How mean and co-
 „ mically a man looks, that is otherwise
 „ well dressed, in a narrow-brimmed hat,
 „ when every body wears broad ones? And
 „ again, how monstrous is a great hat,
 „ when the other extreme has been in fa-
 „ shion for a considerable time? Experience
 „ has taught us, that these modes seldom
 „ last above ten or twelve years; and a man
 „ of threescore must have observed five or
 „ six revolutions of them at least: yet the
 „ beginnings of these changes, though we
 „ have seen several, seem always uncouth,
 „ and are offensive afresh whenever they
 „ return. What mortal can decide which

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 21

is the handsomest, abstracted from the mode in being, to wear great buttons or small ones? The many ways of laying out a garden judiciously are almost innumerable; and what is called beautiful in them, varies according to the tastes of nations and ages. In grass-plats, knots, and parterres, a great diversity of forms is generally agreeable; but a round may be as pleasing to the eye as a square; an oval cannot be more suitable to one place, than it is possible for a triangle to be to another: and the pre-eminence an octagon has over an hexagon, is no greater in figures, than at hazard eight has above six amongst the chances." So

far Mr. Mandeville. It is easily conceived, that the arguments which conclude against intrinsic worth and excellency in the objects of taste, are equally conclusive against a fixed determined taste; and that, if beauty depends on mode or custom, then the taste is as variable

*These
arguments
equally
conclusive
against
a fixed
Taste.*

if
conclusive
252ll. riable and unsettled as the mode, and has
 no fixed rules in nature.

Distinc.
tion
between
real
Beauty,
and her
habitual
Associates

All the confusion this ingenious and
 subtile author has shewn within the
 boundaries of beauty, may be taken
 away, by distinguishing between real
 beauty, that is for ever engaging, and
 the adjuncts, or habitual associates of
 beauty, that please us only acciden-
 tally. If we can shew this difference in
 the objects that please us, the confusion
 he has found will clear up. An elderly lady
 likes the dress she wore in her youth, not
 because it is really more becoming than
 the present fashion, but because that dress
 bears an intimate relation to her days
 of joy, and brings them back to her
 imagination in all the gay colours of
 that happy season of life. In this in-
 stance you will find the nature of those
 mutable charms revealed, that depend
 upon fancy and the mode. Youth is ever
 beau-

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 23

beautiful, and casts a glossy light over all the images of youth, and the dress only pleases by its association. There is, in fact, no arbitrary beauty; and what are called agreeable of this kind, are only the adjuncts or companions that happen accidentally to be joined to real beauty; and by appearing constantly together, to be united to it in idea, and to please merely by the association. The mind places in one connected complex idea, different things that happen to come to it together; memory recollects them together; and a circumstance that has constantly attended on pleasure or pain, will in some degree renew those sensations. The present fashion, when it becomes familiar, becomes also pleasing; that is, it is worn by the young, the gay, and beautiful: the old fashion, in some time after it is left off, becomes disagreeable; that is, it is worn by the morose, who are out of temper with the engaging part of the world;

*Dress
pleases
only by
its being
combined
with
Youth.*

*2nd
thus
consti-
tutes
the
fashion*

*Youth,
and an
engaging
person
can
give
charms
to a
new
Dress.
...
No
natural
Beauty
attached
to Colour.*

by the pedantic, the rustic, and the old. To be convinced that the disgust does not spring from the singularity, but from a disagreeable connexion of ideas, let a lovely and elegant nymph or youth surprise you in a Chinese or Turkish habit, or in a pastoral dress; and you will find, that an engaging person is capable of giving charms to a new dress, and making the simple habit of a shepherd or shepherdess pleasing. The black hue and thick lips of the inhabitants of Africa, considered apart, have no natural beauty; but they are united with the smiles, the dalliances, the kind sentiments, and tender endearing passions in the beauties of Africa; they are united in the same manner on the imagination of the inhabitants by habit, and return in one amiable picture to the mind. The Blacks who have long conversed with Europeans, have also found beauty joined to a fair complexion; consequently the colour is only

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 25

only beautiful by being habitually joined to real beauty. As there are no limits to the adjuncts or circumstances of real beauty, there is an inexhaustible variety in arbitrary beauty or fashion. It is the admission of those casual adjuncts, amongst which are comprehended dress, ceremonies, and furniture, into the same class with things permanently agreeable; and the confusion of them, that have given foundation to objections, and furnished examples against the absolute nature of beauty, and universal unchangeable taste. When those adjuncts are seen alone, they appear indifferent; and when joined to disagreeable ideas, they become disgusting.

Arbitrary Beauty inexhaustibly various but this furnishes no solid objection to unchangeable Taste.

When it is said that good judges have admired blemishes in works of art, and that nothing is more inconsistent than fancy, they say right; but those truths will not bear the conclusions drawn from them: good judges never admired the blemishes

In works of Art

*blemishes
overlooked
when uni-
ted with
superior
Beauty*

*De faults
of Homer
incorpted
with infi-
nite
Beauties*

blemishes separately, but on account of an association with some superior beauty, in which they lay so united and blended, x that the imagination took all together as they appeared in a sum, and passed a verdict upon the whole in gross, which if divided, would have been distinguished. I have seen a mole that has looked very pretty in a fine face, because it was unable to cast the least dimness over the blaze that surrounded it, or to make any manner of resistance to the united force of beauty, that altogether surpris'd and overpowered the judgment. The admirers of Homer have idolized his faults, not because they were destitute of real taste, but because Homer is upon the whole so amazingly fine, and his faults are incorporated with such infinite and superior beauties. If those very blemishes were in works that had no excellencies, or but a few of a low stile, then they would not impose thus on the judgments of men.

The

*Non ego pueris offender maculis
Ubi plura nitent.*

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 27

The same train of reasoning will help to end the old and great dispute, about the stability of moral virtue, and a moral sense. When it is alleged, that actions called immoral in some nations are approved of, and even make a part of religious worship in another; it may be answered, that no nation ever approved of the crimes that are generally reckoned so, for their own sakes, and taken alone, but on account of an association with something of transcendent worth and excellency. Immoralities have mixed with religion, and were revered on account of the union. Human sacrifices were offered at Carthage, the rites of Venus admitted lasciviousness, of Bacchus, drunkenness; and idiots, however vicious, are accounted Saints by Mahometans: but all history testifies that murder, prostitution, and drunkenness, taken alone, were vices amongst the heathens, and are looked upon as crimes by the Turks; that they bore

Immoralities in Religious Worship no Argument against the stability of Moral Virtue. They were revered not on their own account, but

from
their
being
united
with Re-
ligion.

bore the same invariable characters amongst them as with us; and that even the sanction of religion did not alter the landmarks of nature. If you desire to see what kept guilty deeds in repute in the heathen worship, you must take into view the sublime majesty and reverence of religion, with which they were incorporated.

When
c25u2l
Jel:25
211 sep2.
p2led
one uni.
form
judgment
of Beauty
& Virtue

From what I have said it appears, that the arguments alleged do not prove against the unalterable sense of virtue and beauty; since where you separate ideas that have been casually associated, the judgments of men of beauty and virtue, are steadfast and uniform throughout all nations and ages. In our taste of compounds there is an effect like what I have been treating of; if you add a few drops of honey to a large quantity of the juice of wormwood, the whole shall be bitter: if, on the contrary, you mingle a few drops

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 29

drops of the juice of wormwood in a vessel full of honey, the whole shall be sweet; yet are neither the honey nor the wormwood changed, and our taste of sweet and bitter is the same.

In the quotation I made from Mandeville, there are some other objections that require an answer. People may be doubtful and astray in the theory of beauty, who have the most exact intelligence of it in their sensations, by mistaking the point of beauty. A flower-garden attracts our view by the splendor and bright confusion of its colours; and we look at it with pleasure, altho' we take no notice of the figure of the parterre; that is, we discover beauty, without attending to the form and division of the garden. Florists then disagree about the choice of form in the flower-knots, because the beauty of the object of their admiration does not consist in that form. Flowers, in every arrangement-

*Point
of Beauty
in flower
gardens
consists
not in
the form
of the
ground,
but in
the
flowers
themselves.*

not
 attending
 to which
 has
 given
 rise to
 the theorists
 Objection,
 against
 a fixed
 taste of
 Beauty

rangement of the ground, or dispersed irregularly by the wild hand of nature, are pleasing to the eye, like a fine woman, who charms, whether she reclines on a sofa, or walks in the garden. There is hardly room for preference between any regular forms of the parterre, besides fancy and aptitude to the place. The theorist then who contends, that there is no pre-determined taste of beauty in the passion of florists, because they differ in the form of flower-gardens, is deceived, because he has mistaken the point of beauty, which consists not in the form of the ground, but in the flowers themselves.

There is a supposition that runs thro' Mandeville, and several other writers on this subject, who undoubtedly copy one from the other, that beauty is of one kind, and differs only in degree; and therefore, that if there be such a thing as real beauty in objects, we can compare

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 31

pare it, and always discover the most
 excellent; as men are able, by measur-
 ing, to determine the longest cane, or
 the highest steeple: thence they pro-
 ceed to conclude, from the confusion of
 men, and from the variety of their choice
 and judgment, that there is no real
 beauty; whereas, in fact, beauty is an
 exceeding general term, that comprehends
 very distant and various kinds that have
 no common measure, and consequently
 cannot be compared. Pictures and sta-
 tues are like the originals in such va-
 rious classes, that their excellencies can-
 not be measured with each other. It is
 as absurd, perhaps, to compare a good
 landskip to a good portrait, as to com-
 pare a fine prospect with a handsome
 man. Neither can the reciprocal propor-
 tion of beauty be determined between
 different characters, even within the same
 species. It is probably impossible to as-
 certain any rules of judgment, by which
 the

Beauty
2 very
general
term.
instanced
in
Pictures
2nd Stat.
-tues;
Prospects;
2nd per-
-sonal
Beauty;
even
in the
same

*species
not the
same:*

the superiority may be determined, between the Apollo of Belvidere and the Venus of Medici: yet this is no argument that their beauties are not real and clearly known; it only proves, that they are of different kinds. From what I

*the
beauties
of Homer,
and Virgil
of different
kinds.*

have said, we may easily conceive the reason of the difficulty of determining the superiority between Homer and Virgil, as poets. If their principal excellencies lay in one kind; if Virgil's chief merit consisted in the grandeur of his thoughts, or Homer's in majesty and a chaste sweetness, the point of preference between them might be decided: but while their distinguishing beauties vary in kind, the contention of superiority is endless. Yet can any one thence

*when
beauties
cannot
be com-
pared*

conclude, that they want real merit? or that men want a natural taste for their charms? When pleasing objects lie in different departments of beauty, and cannot be compared, then pre-engagement,

et ou merite le plus d'Éloges?

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 33

gagement, the praises of others whose judgments we value, novelty, or the scarcity of one kind, turn the scale; and form the preference. You may prefer the mild fragrancy and glow of a rose, another may rather admire the gorgeous array of a tulip, yet neither has strayed from the province of beauty. *

*Taste
then
only
becomes
arbitrary*

The small value put upon some flowers, is not a proof that they are not esteemed, but that they are common. The rose and honeysuckle are neglected and left in the hedges, not because they want beauty, but because they are every where presented to our eyes, and may be had without pains or price. We value them, and pass them by without curiosity, as we do the wild concert we hear in the woods and copses. It is a mistake to think men value things in proportion as they pay for them. Good air, sleep, daylight, or the liberty

*Things
not valued
in propor-
tion to
their cost;
but the
most
valued
as they are
common
seem to
be neglected.*

D

of

* Lequel merite la preference
de Corneille, ou de Racine; - lequel
des deux fruits, de l'Orange, ou de
la Pêche, a le gout le plus exquis? *

Harmonie

of going where we please, are known by every one to be blessings of the first rate; yet no one buys them who is at liberty to enjoy them, although people pay dearly for things they do not value half so much.

*Appli-
cation
of the
Term
Taste in
common
Discourse.*

*Mixed
Taste
Term
of the
times*

You readily conceive, that taste in common discourse, is applied to the habitual prepossessions of a nation, particularly of the people of fashion, in which sense it comprehends both the universal attachments which are common to the species, and the casual likings and aversions in matters naturally indifferent, such as the modes of dress and furniture, which by an accidental association are become objects of preference and disgust. In this vulgar sense, taste is no more than the image of the times upon the mind, which varies in nations and ages, or amongst particular persons,

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 35

persons, and may be called *mixed taste*. When you untwine the parts of mixed taste, when you reject all that is casual, and peculiar to this or that country or age as spurious, and have taken the universal charms that affect the savage and courtier, the rustic and philosopher, the Indian and European, this last is real beauty, the object of the taste I treat of. And happy it is for the fame of poets, philosophers, and patriots, that there is such a sense in the human mind, by which their eternal palms flourish, and must bloom afresh through all ages, as long as mankind remain in being.

You are to observe, that I do not call taste a species of judgment, although it is actually that part of judgment, whose objects are the sublime, the beautiful, and affecting; because this kind of judgment is not the issue of reason and comparison, like a mathematical inference,

*on the
Mind.*

*Real
beauty
the object
of univers.
is the 2^d attach-
ment.*

*which is
not a
judgment
but*

2^d Per.

ception

Doubt

whether

the term

taste is

in use

in the

learned

languages,

trifling,

ness of it

ence, but is perceived instantaneously, and obtruded upon the mind, like sweet and bitter upon the sense, from which analogy it has borrowed the name of taste. There have been criticks so trifling, as to enquire whether the word taste, which is plainly metaphorical, was in use in the learned languages. A man blessed with plain common sense would undoubtedly conceive that the thing meant by it was known, ever since beauty and grandeur of thought were observed in the world, and admired. We may to as much purpose enquire whether the ancients had distinct names for the tenderness of a parent, or the flavour of Chian wine; and if we find no such words upon record, conclude that the ancients did not love their children, or distinguish their wines.

Lumiere.

vue

8

Good taste is the inward light or intelligence of universal beauty. In Greece,

The To Kador, including
the To vov.

where

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 37

where it first shone, poetry, architecture, painting, sculpture, and music, sprung up together, the beautiful children of one birth. At the same time the men were remarkable for elevated sentiments, and the women for that elegance which gives the last lustre to beauty. The same revolution happened in Rome; and now again the sciences revive in concert in Europe, and elegance awakes with the arts. In the ages of ignorance they all languished, and fell together. The heavy, confused, and gross ornaments of the old Gothick buildings, placed without elegance or proportion (says Rollin) were the images of the writings of the same age.

From the joint appearance and recess of the engaging arts, it is obvious that they are related and depend upon the same principle; accordingly you find a striking conformity in the most distant produc-

*Good Taste
to intel-
- n-26
Intelli-
-gence
of
Beauty
ever
found
in concert
with the
sciences
2 stri-
-king
conformity
in the*

most
distant
products
of genius.

tions of genius. Music inspires us like a glowing description; the statue and picture breathe the fire and passion of poetry; and you will discover the same stile and image of grandeur in Corregio + that you see in Homer.

IV.

To repeat

True
taste,

2nd file.

2nd

inspired

from N2.

2nd

Propety

True taste discovers with delight the image of nature, and pursues it with a faithful passion. The graceful and the becoming are never found separated from nature and propriety. When we came to this observation in Rollin, you made an objection, that obliged me, in order to answer it, to make some reflections, which led me nearer the origin of elegance than I expected. Your objection, madam, was this: "If elegance be inseparable from propriety and nature, why are not the common people, who are without education, just as nature made them, the most graceful? and why does elegance reside only amongst those who

are

ut Pictura Poesis. r . . .

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 39

are formed by art?" I could not pass over this ingenious question without an answer, and it led me to the following observations:

It is not from men in want, whether real or imaginary, we are to seek for the natural bias of the soul. The necessities and comforts of life are procured by vast labour and hardships, which fall to the lot of the common herd of mankind in all countries; and labour requires harsh, forced, and violent motions, which therefore become habitual to the crowd. As this race of men walk not for pleasure, but to perform journeys, or to remove where their occasions call them, they take the advantage of bending the body forward, and of aiding the motion by a sling with their arms as they walk. Their low station, their wants and employments, give them a sordidness and ungenerosity of disposition, together with a

+
Taste
buried,
2nd
oppressed
under
Wrath.
-ness, &
want.

D 4 coarseness

* "Servitude is a kind of prison,
wherein the soul in some measure
shrinks, and diminishes
by constraint." Longin: lib: 35.
Homer: Odys: l: 17 & 322 -

coarseness and nakedness of expression; from whence it happens, that their motions and address are equally rude and ungraceful. And yet by considering the matter closely you may discover, that this unseemly and dishonoured state of man is accidental, and is in truth the offspring of his wants, and of the miseries that yoke him down a slave to the glebe he tills, and depress together his mind and body. But observe the few in a higher station, who by their fortunes are disengaged from wretchedness and poverty, who vegetate freely, and take the bias of the unfettered human genius. You see their taste soon distinguish them from the crowd, they assume a more elevated character, they seem to be inspired by a nobler soul, a more generous vein discovers itself in their bosoms, elegance and lofty decency make their appearance in the human state, and an illustrious nature appears to view, which was nevertheless real while it lay buried

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 41

buried and oppressed under wretchedness.

Abject meanness and rudeness then are the issue of hardship and want, but not of the human disposition or frame of mind; on the contrary, the moment man is released from the violence and misery that oppress him, that his real nature takes the lead, and his taste assumes its honest rights; it covers him with decent elegance; it bestows on him a dignity worthy of the sovereign of earth, air, and water; it wraps him in the golden visions of poetry and music, and charms him with the new ideas of beauty and grandeur. These are the natural passions that lay hid, and now break forth to view, when the pressure is taken off that bent down the slave, and chained his attentions to the earth. The appetite of beauty lies always in the mind ready to direct us to finer prospects. Conceive a youthful

A sense of Beauty not lost in a state of hardship, & want.

leisure
2nd
quiet
only
wanting
to attend
to it.

youthful monarch, long astray upon a barren heath, amongst miserable villagers, his infant years almost forgotten, and his thoughts wholly taken up by his present unfortunate circumstances. He is at length discovered, and restored to his court, to grandeur, and pleasure, which he recollects with secret joy. Taste finds us in this manner forlorn outcasts, she strips us of our rudeness, and leads us to scenes and prospects where all is beautiful, and all is familiar. You may easily see the reason why the inhabitants of barren countries and of the northern part of Europe and Asia must fall into rudeness, and men who spend their whole time in hunting and procuring the necessaries of life become savages; a sense of beauty is not lost in them, they only want leisure and quiet to attend to it.

Here then is the key to your difficulty. Elevation of thought, and the sense of beauty, are natural to the soul; but soon after

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 43

after the infant comes into the world, long before the mind is matured, or its attentions meet its favourite objects, cold, heat, hunger, sickness, and the various distresses to which we are subjected, prevent our sentiments, and model our views into a fordid mundane scheme of interest, of riches, and power; and teach us to set a mighty value on the conveniencies that redress our wants. Beauty, and grandeur of sentiment, however illustrious, are not so pressing as necessity, they are the discoveries of a tranquil mind, and must lye behind the curtain, while want and labour issue forth upon the stage, and engage the attention. Labour and want are the same thing to the human mind, that frost and a chilling air are to a tender tree or flowering shrub, transplanted to a northern climate; they blast it, and forbid its native flowers and verdure to appear, and they present it to the eye in barrenness and winter naked-

*Eleva-
-tion
of thought
natural
to the
Soul
but
blasted
by the
frost,
and chills
the Air
of Want,
and Ne-
cessity.*

** Etiam ferz animalia si
clausa teneas virtutis oblivis-
-centur. * Tacit: Hist: 4. * **

ness. Uncomely barbarity, and a fordid disposition, are the unworthy offspring of our miseries and sufferings, every day impresses them deeper upon the mind, in which dishonoured state the race of man must have continued, until from art and industry, arose plenty and ease. Thus in proportion as our species emerge out of want, they meet and embrace the familiar ideas of dignity and beauty, and get short interrupted views of the sources of the fine arts, as men converse with well-known acquaintances in their sleep, whom they never knew in real life; then the frost begins to dissolve, the barren orange shrub is removed to a more southern soil, where it puts forth unknown blossoms, and bears in pride its golden fruit.

Taste often more controllable However I must observe, that in savage rudeness and barbarity, taste lies very near the reflections of men; and, as I said, the reason they miss of it is, because

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 45

cause they are employed on objects of greater importance; but in polite nations, taste is often more irretrievable, because, when a mixed taste has got possession of the mind, the natural sense of beauty is deceived, and seeks for no other object. *in po. lite Nations*

Having answered the objections usually brought against a permanent sense of beauty, let us now proceed to single out the particular species or kinds of beauty; and begin with elegance of person, that so wonderfully elevates the human character. *partic^r kinds of Beauty*

x Elegance, the most undoubted offspring and visible image of fine taste, the moment it appears, is universally admired: men disagree about the other constituent parts of beauty, but they all unite without hesitation to acknowledge the power of elegance. *Grace, 2nd Elegance of Person*

The

** In Beauty; the Beauty of Favour is more than that of Colour; 2nd the Beauty of gracious, & decent motion more than that of Favour. "Bacon"*

*The
Graces
Emblems
of the
human
Mind
in its
loveliest
forms.*

The general opinion is, that this most conspicuous part of beauty, that is perceived and acknowledged by every body, is yet utterly inexplicable, and retires from our search when we would discover what it is. Where shall I find the secret retreat of the graces, to explain to me the elegance they dictate, and to paint in visible colours the fugitive and varying enchantment that hovers round a graceful person, yet leaves us for ever in agreeable suspense and confusion? I need not seek for them, madam; the graces are but emblems of the human mind, in its loveliest appearances; and while I write for you, it is impossible not to feel their influence.

*Defini-
tion of
Personal
Elegance.*

Personal Elegance, for that is the object of our present enquiry, may be defined the image and reflection of the grandeur and beauty of the invisible soul. Grandeur and beauty in the soul itself,
are

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 47

are not objects of sense; colours cannot paint them, but they are united to sentiments that appear visible; they bestow a noble meaning and importance of attitude, and diffuse inexpressible loveliness over the person.

When two or more passions or sentiments unite, they are not so readily distinguished, as if they had appeared separate; however, it is easy to observe, that the complacency and admiration we feel in the presence of elegant persons, is made up of respect and affection; and that we are disappointed when we see such persons act a base or indecent part.

These symptoms plainly shew, that personal elegance appears to us to be the image and reflection of an elevated and beautiful mind. In some characters, the grandeur of soul is predominant; in whom beauty is majestic and lawful. In this file is Miss F—. In other charac-

*Respect,
and Affection
component
parts
of our
admiration
of elegance.*

Respect

2^d effect

ters, a soft and attracting grace is more conspicuous: this latter kind is more pleasing, for an obvious reason. But elegance cannot exist in either alone, without a mixture of the other; for majesty without the beautiful, would be haughty and disgusting; and easy accessible beauty would lose the idea of elegance, and become an object of contempt.

Grandeur

2^d Beau-

ty of the

Soul

charm

universally

The grandeur and beauty of the soul charm us universally, who have all of us implanted in our bosoms, even in the midst of misery, passions of high descent, immense ambition, and romantick hopes. You may conceive an imprisoned bird, whose wild notes, prompted by the approach of spring, give her a confused notion of joy, although she has no distinct idea of airy flights and summer groves; so when man emerging from wretchedness assumes a nobler character, and the elevation of the human genius appears openly, we view with secret joy, and

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 49

and delightful amazement, the sure evidence and pledge of our dignity: the mind catches fire by a train that lies within itself, and expands with conscious pride and merit, like a generous youth over the images of his country's heroes. Of the softened and engaging part of elegance, I shall have occasion to speak at large hereafter.

Personal elegance or grace is a fugitive lustre, that never settles in any part of the body; you see it glance and disappear in the features and motions of a graceful person; it strikes your view; it shines like an exhalation: but the moment you follow it, the wandering flame vanishes, and immediately lights up in something else: you may as well think of fixing the pleasing delusion of your dreams, or the colours of a dissolving rainbow. *Je Synthiz of Je moment.*

*Grace
of Person
2 fugitive
lustre.*

E

Σωφρα κα ἀκρυσ
Εὐαγιστὸς ὁ σωφρ } *Anthol: l. 7* You
 Her Person the perfect Grace
 Of the vernal Hours.

*The
Soul
flings
Charms
over the
person;
like the
Sun before
his rising
over Nature*

You have arisen early at times, in the summer season, to take the advantage of the cool of the morning, to ride abroad. Let us suppose you have mistaken an hour or two, and just got out a few minutes before the rising of the sun. You see the fields and woods, that lay the night before in obscurity, attiring themselves in beauty and verdure; you see a profusion of brilliants shining in the dew; you see the stream gradually admitting the light into its pure bosom; and you hear the birds, who are awakened by a rapture, that comes upon them from the morning. If the eastern sky be clear, you see it glow with the promise of a flame that has not yet appeared; and if it be overcast with clouds, you see those clouds stained by a bright red, bordered with gold or silver, that by the changes appear volatile, and ready to vanish. How various and beautiful are those appearances, which are not the sun, but the distant effects of it over

dif-

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 51

different objects! In like manner the soul flings inexpressible charms over the human person and actions; but then the cause is less known, because the soul for ever shines behind a cloud, and is always retired from our senses.

You conceive why elegance is of a fugitive nature, and exists chiefly in motion: as it is communicated by the principle of action that governs the whole person, it is found over the whole body, and is fixed no where. The curious eye with eagerness pursues the wandering beauty, which it sees with surprize at every turn, but is never able to overtake. It is a waving flame, that, like the reflection of the sun from water, never settles; it glances on you in every motion and disposition of the body: its different powers through attitude and motion seem to be collected in dancing, wherein it

*Elegance
exists
chiefly
in Motion*

E 2

plays

* *Ver2 incessu patuit Dea.* —

CLIO; OR, A

*its
Throne
in the
face.*

plays over the arms, the legs, the breast, the neck, and in short the whole frame: but if grace has any fixed throne, it is in the face, the residence of the soul, where you think a thousand times it is just issuing into view.

*wide
Empire
of Elegance.*

Elegance assumes to itself an empire equal to that of the soul; it rules and inspires every part of the body, and makes use of all the human powers; but it particularly takes the passions under its charge and direction, and turns them into a kind of artillery, with which it does infinite execution.

*Passions
favourites
with
the Graces*

The passions that are favourites with the graces are modesty, good-nature, particularly when it is heightened by a small colouring of affection into sweetness, and that fine languor which seems to be formed of a mixture of still joy and hope. Sur-
prize,

* The glance divine, forth beaming
from the mind. Hom: Odyss: 6: 13. 501

+ Love, hope, and joy, fair pleasures
smiling train.

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 53

prize, shame, and even grief and anger, have appeared pleasing under proper restrictions ; for it must be observed, that all excess is shocking and disagreeable, and that even the most pleasing passions appear to most advantage when the tincture they cast over the countenance is enfeebled and gentle. The passions that are enemies to the graces are impudence, affectation, strong and harsh degrees of pride, malice, and austerity.

There is an union of the fine passions, but so delicate that you cannot conceive any one of them separate from the rest, called *sensibility*, which is requisite in an elegant deportment ; it chiefly resides in the eye, which is indeed the seat of the passions.

*Sensblty
resides
chiefly
in the
Eye.*

I have spoken of the passions only as they are subservient to grace, which is the object of our present attention. The

*The
Countenance
the
habitation
of Grace.*

face is the mother-country, if I may call it so, or the habitation of grace; and it visits the other parts of the body only as distant provinces, with some little partiality to the neck, and the fine basis that supports it; but the countenance is the very palace in which it takes up its residence; it is there it revels through its various apartments: you see it wrapped in clouded majesty upon the brow; you discover it about the lips hardly rising to a smile, and vanishing in a moment, when it is rather perceived than seen; and then, by the most engaging vicissitudes, it enlivens, flames, and dissolves in the eye.

*Grace
without
Beauty
pleasing*

You have, I suppose, all along observed, that I am not treating of beauty, which depends on different principles, but of that elegance which is the effect of a delicate and awakened taste, and in every kind of form is the enchantment that attracts and pleases universally, even

* *Vultus nimium lubricus* (without aspect. Horat. —

The Eye * * * *uncommon Fire*
Sparkle, languish. * Anacr. Od. 28.
visor; humidum; liquescentem. *
glistening. —

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 55

without the assistance of any other charm; whereas without it no degree of beauty is charming. You have undoubtedly seen women lovely without much beauty, and handsome without being lovely; it is gracefulness causes this variation, and throws a lustre over disagreeable features, as the sun paints a showery cloud with the colours of the rainbow.

I before remarked, that the grace of every elegant person is varied agreeable to the character and disposition of the person it beautifies; I am sensible you readily conceive the reason. Elegance is the natural habit and image of the soul beaming forth in action; it must therefore be expressed by the peculiar features, air, and disposition of the person; it must arise from nature, and flow with ease and a propriety that distinguishes it. The imitation of any particular person, how-

E 4

ever

~~The~~ The appearance of the Bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain. Ezek. c. 1 v. 28.

unstudied elegance of Nature how we get it
 ever graceful, is dangerous, lest the affectation appear; but the unstudied elegance of nature is acquired by the example and conversation of several elegant persons of different characters, which people adopt to the import of their own gestures, without knowing how.

Statues and Pictures represented as in Motion - why.
 It is also because elegance is the reflection of the soul appearing in action, that good statues, and pictures drawn from life, are laid before the eye in motion. If you look at the old Gothic churches built in barbarous ages, you will see the statues reared up dead and inanimate against the walls.

I said, at the beginning of this little discourse, that the beauty of dress results from mode or fashion, and it certainly does so in a great measure; but I must limit that assertion by the following observation, that there is also a real beauty

** Non solum Virtus, at Elegance in actione consistit.*

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 57

in attire that does not depend on the *Real*
mode: those robes which leave the whole *beauty*
 person at liberty in its motions, and that *in Attire*
 give to the imagination the natural pro- *not*
 * portions and symmetry of the body, are *depend-*
 always more becoming than such as re- *dent*
 strain any part of the body, or in which *on F2*
 it is lost or disfigured. You may easily *shion*
 imagine how a pair of stays laced tightly
 about the Minerva we admired, would
 oppress the sublime beauty of her com-
 portment and figure. Since persons of
 rank cannot chuse their own dress, but
 must run along with the present fashion,
 the secret of dressing gracefully must con-
 sist in the slender variations that cannot
 be observed to desert the fashion, and yet
 approach nigher to the complexion and
import of the countenance, and that at
 the same time allows to the whole body
 the greatest possible freedom, ease, and
 imagery: by imagery I mean, that as a
 good painter will shew the effect of the

muscles

* *The Body, not her Shape conceal.*
Answer: Od. 28

muscles that do not appear to the eye, so a person skilful in dress will display the elegance of the form, though it be covered and out of view. As the taste of dress approaches to perfection all art disappears, and it seems the effect of negligence and instinctive inattention: for this reason its beauties arise from the manner and general air rather than from the richness, which last, when it becomes too gross and oppressive, destroys the elegance. A brilliancy and parade in dress is therefore the infallible sign of a bad taste, that in this contraband manner endeavours to make amends for the want of true elegance, and bears a relation to the heaps of ornament that encumbered the Gothic buildings. Apelles observing an Helen painted by one of his scholars, that was overcharged with a rich dress, "I find, young man, said he, not being able to paint her beautiful, you have made her fine."

not
Rich.
ness,
and
Art.
-siney.

Ἡ μείζακιον μὴ δύναμενος
γράφει καλὴν, πλεῖστα πεποίηκας. Harsh

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 59

Harsh and violent motions are always unbecoming. Milton attributes the same kind of motion to his angels that the Heathens did to their deities, soft sliding without step. It is impossible to preserve the attractions in a country-dance that attend on a minuet; as the step quickens, the most delicate of the graces retire. The rule holds universally through all action, whether quick or slow; it should always partake of the same polished and softened motion, particularly in the transitions of the countenance, where the genius of the person seems to hover and reside.

*Harsh;
2nd
violent
motions
ungraceful.*

The degrees run very high upon the scale of elegance, and probably few have arrived near the highest pitch; but it is certain, that the idea of surprising beauty that was familiar in Greece, has been hardly conceived by the moderns: many of their statues remain the objects of our ad-

*Sur-
prising
Beauty
of the
Grecian
Statues;*

Pictures admiration, but wholly superior to imi-
and tation; their pictures that have sunk in
Poetry the wreck of time, appear in the descrip-
 tions made of them to have equal imagi-
 nation with the statues; and their poetry
 abounds with the same cœlestial imagery.
 But what puts this matter out of doubt
 is, that their celebrated beauties were
 the models of their artists, and it is
 known, that the elegancies of Thais and
Phryne were copied by the famous pain-
 ters of Greece, and consigned to canvass
 and marble to astonish and charm distant
 ages. x *Plin: 34 & 8.* x

Analysis Personal elegance, in which taste as-
of sumes the most conspicuous and noble
personal appearance, confuses us in our enquiries
 after it, by the quickness and variety of
Elegance its changes, as well as by a complica-
 tion that is not easily unravelled. I de-
 fined it to be the image and reflection of
 a great and beautiful soul; let us sepa-

rate

x *Quod nequeo monstrare, et sentio tantum*
Juvén.

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 61

rate the distinct parts of this variety; when they appear asunder, you will find them perfectly familiar and intelligible.

The first, and most respectable part, *decent*
that enters into the composition of ele- *dignity*
gance, is the lofty consciousness of
worth or virtue, which sustains an ha-
bitual decency, and becoming pride. *το ησενον.*

The second and most pleasing part, *2*
is a display of good-nature approaching *display*
to affection, of gentle affability, and, in
general, of the pleasing passions. It
seems difficult to reconcile these two
parts, and in fact it is so; but when
they unite, then they appear like a re-
served and virgin kindness, that is at
once noble and soft, that may be won,
but must be courted with delicacy. *of Good-nature.*

The third part of elegance is the *2nd 2nd*
appearance of a polished and tranquil *2pprce*
habit *of se*

Ἡσυχία
Ψυχῇ.

ἡσυχία
- quiet
mind.

habit of mind, that softens the actions and emotions, and gives a covert prospect of innocence and undisturbed repose. I will treat of these separate, and first of dignity of soul.

Excellence
of the
human
Mind
whence
arising

I observed, near the beginning of this Discourse, in answer to an objection you made, that the mind has always a taste for truth, for gratitude, for generosity, and greatness of soul: these, which are peculiarly called sentiments, stamp upon the human spirit a dignity and worth not to be found in any other animated being. However great and surprising the most glorious objects in nature be, the heaving ocean, the moon that guides it and casts a softened lustre over the night, the starry firmament, or the sun itself; yet their beauty and grandeur instantly appear of an inferior kind, beyond all comparison, to this of the soul of man. These sentiments are united under the
general

+ The midnight moon serenely smiles
O'er Nature's soft Repose.

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 63

general name of virtue ; and such are the embellishments they diffuse over the mind, that Plato, a very polite philosopher, says finely, " If Virtue was to appear in a visible shape, all men would be enamoured of her."

Virtue and truth are inseparable, and take their flight together. A mind devoid of truth is a frightful wreck ; it is like a great city in ruins, whose mouldring towers just bring to the imagination the mirth and life that once were there, and is now no more. Truth is the genius of taste, and enters into the essence of simple beauty in wit, in writing, and throughout the fine arts.

*Truth, &
Virtue
inseparable.
Truth
the Genius
of Taste.*

Generosity covers almost all other defects, and raises a blaze around them in which they disappear and are lost : like sovereign beauty, it makes a short cut to our affections ; it wins our hearts

*Amble
ness
of
Generosity*

without

x Beneficence covers a multitude of Sins.

without resistance or delay, and unites all the world to favour and support its designs.

Magnanimity
2d admirable
2nd
delightful
without
man
the visible
creation

Grandeur of soul, fortitude, and a resolution that haughtily struggles with despair, and will neither yield to, nor make terms with, misfortunes; which through every situation, reposes a noble confidence in itself, and has an immovable view to future glory and honour, astonishes the world with admiration and delight. We, as it were, lean forward with surprize and trembling joy to behold the human soul collecting its strength, and asserting a right to superior fates. When you leave man out of your account, and view the whole visible creation beside, you indeed see several traces of grandeur and unspeakable power, and the intermixture of a rich scenery of beauty; yet still the whole appears to be but a solemn absurdity, and

want truth, generosity, or grandeur of soul, it instantly sinks in our esteem like counterfeit coin, and we are sensible of a reluctant disappointment like that of the lover in the epigram, who became enamoured with the lady's voice and the softness of her hand in the dark, but was cured of his passion as soon as he had light to view her.

Let us now pass on to the most pleasing part of elegance, an habitual display of the kind and gentle passions.

*Politeness
pleasing
ness of.*

We are naturally inclined to love those who bear an affection to us; and we are charmed with the homage that is paid to our merit: by these weaknesses politeness attacks us. The well-bred gentleman always in his behaviour insinuates a regard to others, tempered with respect. His attention to please

confesses

*✓ This seems to be the meaning
of Old Polonius' advice;
'Love thyself last'
and of another author - 'In
honour to prefer one another.'*

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 67

confesses plainly his kindness to you, and the high esteem he holds you in. The assiduous prevention of our wishes, and that yielding sweetness, complaisance puts on for our sake, are irresistible; and although we know this kind of flattery to be prostitute and habitual, yet it is not indifferent to us; we receive it in a manner that shews how much it gratifies us.

The desire of being agreeable, finds out the art of being so without study or labour. Rustics who fall in love, grow unusually polite and engaging. This new charm, that has altered their natures, and suddenly endued them with the powers of pleasing, is nothing more than an enlivened attention to please, that has taken possession of their minds, and tintured their actions. We ought not to wonder that love is thus enchanting: its

*Rustics
in Love
unusually
polite.*

tender assiduity is but the natural address of the passion; politeness borrows the flattering form of affection, and becomes agreeable by the appearance of kindness.

Complai. What pleases us generally appears beautiful. Complaisance, that is so engaging, gives an agreeableness to the whole person, and creates a beauty that nature gave not to the features; it submits, it promises, it applauds in the countenance; the heart lays itself in smiles at your feet, and a voice that is indulgent and tender, is always heard with pleasure.

Hsuxin
ψυχν. — The last constituent part of elegance is the picture of a tranquil soul that appears in softening the actions and emotions, and exhibits a retired prospect of happiness and innocence.

A calm

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 69

A calm of mind that is seen in graceful easy action, and in the enfeeblement of our passions, gives us an idea of the golden age, when human nature, adorned with innocence, and the peace that attends it, reposed in the arms of content. This serene prospect of human nature always pleases us; and although the content, whose image it is, be visionary in this world, and we cannot arrive at it, yet it is the point in imagination we have finally in view, in all the pursuits of life, and the native home for which we do not cease to languish.

imitation

gives us the

Idea

of a better state

of human Nature

The sentiment of tranquillity particularly beautifies pastoral poetry. The images of calm and happy quiet that appear in shaded groves, in silent vales, and slumbers by falling streams, invite the poet to indulge his genius in rural scenes. The music that lulls and composes the mind, at the same time enchants it. The

Idea

of tranquillity its beauty in pastoral poetry, in

F 3

hue

x *Secura quietes, et nescire fallere Vita.*
- *Secretum Iter, et fallentis semita Vita.*

Music, hue of this beauteous ease, cast over the
2nd in human actions and emotions, forms a
human very delightful part of elegance, and
actions, gives the other constituent parts an ap-
2nd pearance of nature and truth: for in a
emotns. tranquil state of mind, undisturbed by
 wants or fears, the views of men are
 generous and elevated. From the com-
 bination of these fine parts, grandeur of
soul, complacency, and ease, arise the
 enchantments of elegance; but the ap-
 pearance of the two last are oftener found
 together, and then they form Politeness.

The When we take a view of the separate
Seeds parts that constitute personal elegance,
of per- we immediately know the seeds that are
sonal proper to be cherished in the infant mind,
filence to bring forth the beauteous production.
should The virtues should be cultivated early
 with sacred care. Good-nature, modesty,
 affability, and a kind concern for others,

should

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 71

should be carefully inculcated ; and an easy unconstrained dominion acquired by habit over the passions. A mind thus finely prepared, is capable of the highest lustre of elegance ; which is afterwards attained with as little labour as our first language, by only associating with graceful people of different characters, from whom an habitual gracefulness will be acquired, that will bear the natural unaffected stamp of our own minds : in short, it will be our own character and genius stripped of its native rudeness, and enriched with beauty and attraction.

*be
cherish'd
in the
youthful
mind*

Nature, that bestows her favours without respect of persons, often denies to the great the capacity of distinguished elegance, and flings it away in obscure villages. You sometimes see it at a country fair spread an amiableness over a sun-burnt girl, like the light of the moon through a mist ; but such, madam, is the

*Elegance
often
found
in
villages*

F 4

necessity

** Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And lose its sweetness in the desert Air.*

* * * ———

necessity of habitual elegance acquired by education and converse, that if even you were born in that low class, you could be no more than the fairest damsel at the may-pole, and the object of the hope and jealousy of a few rustics.

*Causes
of Gross.*

ness, and

Inelegance,

*their
Effects
on the
Mind*

People are rendered totally incapable of elegance by the want of good-nature, and the other gentle passions; by the want of modesty and sensibility; and by a want of that noble pride which arises from a consciousness of lofty and generous sentiments. The absence of these native charms is generally supplied by a brisk stupidity, an impudence unconscious of defect, a cast of malice, and an uncommon tendency to ridicule; as if nature had given these her step-children an instinctive intelligence, that they can rise out of contempt only by the depression of others. For the same reason it is, that persons of true and finished taste

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 73

taste seldom affect ridicule, because they are conscious of their own superior merit. Pride is the cause of ridicule in the one, as it is of candour in the other; but the effects differ, as the studied parade of poverty does from the negligent grandeur of riches. You will see nothing more common in the world than for people, who by stupidity and insensibility are incapable of the graces, commence wits on the strength of the *petite* talents of mimicry, and the brisk tartness that ill-nature never fails to supply.

*Pride
is
Cause
of
Ridic-
-cule.*

From what I have said it appears, that a sense of elegance is a sense of dignity, of virtue, and innocence united. Is it not natural then to expect, that in the course of a liberal education, men should cultivate the generous qualities they approve and assume? But instead of them, men only aim at the appearances, which require no self-denial; and thus, with-

*The
Ap-
-pear-
-ances
of
Elegance
only
aimed
at.*

out

2nd
Vice
united
with
dress,
2nd com-
plexion
of virtue

out acquiring the virtues, they sacrifice their honesty and sincerity: whence it comes to pass, that there is often the least virtue where there is the greatest appearance of it; and that the polished part of mankind only arrive at the subtile corruption, of uniting vice with the dress and complexion of virtue.

Prin-
ciples
of easy
Grace,
2nd
simple
Grandeur
feet
extensive-
ness.

I have dwelt on personal elegance, because the ideas and principles in this part of good taste are more familiar to you. We may then take them for a foundation, in our future observations, since the same principles of easy grace and simple grandeur, will animate our ideas with an unstudied propriety, and enlighten our judgments in beauty, in literature, in sculpture, painting, and the other departments of fine taste.

vi

x

I shall but slightly touch on our taste of personal beauty, because it requires no directions

La Beauté n'est autre chose
qu'un just Accord, et une harmonie,
des Membres, avec un bon tem-
perament. v Galen: sur les sentim:
de Hippocrate & Platon. x

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 75

directions to be known. To ask what is beauty, says a philosopher, is the question of a blind man. I shall therefore only make a few reflections on this head, that lie out of the common tract. But prior to what I have to say, it is necessary to make some observations on physiognomy.

*Person's
Beauty*

There is an obvious relation between the mind and the turn of the features, so well known by instinct, that every one is more or less expert at reading the countenance. We look as well as speak our minds; and amongst people of little experience, the look is generally most sincere. This is so well understood, that it is become a part of education to learn to disguise the countenance, which yet requires a habit from early youth, and the continual practice of hypocrisy, to deceive an intelligent eye. The natural virtues and vices not only have their places in the aspect, even acquired habits that much affect

*Observations
on Phys-
iognomy*

* *Silence that speaks, & Eloquence of Eyes.*

affect the mind settle there; contempla-
tion, in length of time, gives a cast of
thought to the countenance.

*Beauty
is Image
of noble
sentiments,
and amiable
passions
in the
countenance.*

Now to come back to our subject:
the assemblage called beauty, is the image
of noble sentiments and amiable passions
in the face; but so blended and confused
that we are not able to separate and di-
stinguish them. The mind has a sen-
sibility, and clear knowledge, in many
instances without reflection, or even the
power of reasoning upon its own percep-
tions. We can no more account for the
relation between the passions of the mind
and "a set of features," than we can ac-
count for the relation between the sounds
of musick and the passions; the eye
is judge of the one without principles
or rules, as the ear is of the other.
It is impossible you should not take
notice of the remarkable difference of
beauty

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 77

beauty in the same face, in a good and in ill humour; and if the gentle passions in an indifferent face, do not change it to perfect beauty; it is, because nature did not originally model the features to the just and familiar expression of those passions, and the genuine expressions of nature can never be wholly obliterated. But it is necessary to observe, that the engaging import that forms beauty, is often the symbol of passions that, although pleasing, are dangerous to virtue; and that a firmness of mind, whose cast of feature is much less pleasing, is more favourable to virtue. From the affinity between beauty and the passions it must follow, that beauty is relative, that is, a sense of human beauty is confined to our species; and also, as far as we have a power over the passions, we are able to improve the face, and transplant charms into it; both of which observations have

*signifi-
cancy.*

*Beauty
is relative
and im-
provable*

*whence
the variety
of Beauty*

been often made. From the various principles of beauty, and the agreeable combinations, of which the face gives intelligence, springs that variety found in the stile of beauty.

*Tincture
of the
Skin
pleasing
only by
association*

Complexion is a kind of beauty that is pleasing only by association. The brown, the fair, the black, are not any of them original beauty; but when the complexion is united in one picture on the imagination, with the assemblage that forms the image of the tender passions, with gentle smiles, and kind endearments, it is then inseparable from our idea of beauty, and forms a part of it. From the same cause, a national set of features appear amiable to the inhabitants, who have been accustomed to see the amiable dispositions through them. This observation resolves a difficulty, that often occurs in the reflections of men on our present subject. We all speak of beauty as
if

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 79

if it were acknowledged and settled by a *The*
publick standard; yet we find, in fact, *common*
 that people, in placing their affections, *Standard*
 often have little regard to the common *of Beauty*
 notions of beauty. The truth is, com- *often*
 plexion and form being the charms that *contr-*
 are visible and conspicuous, the com- *-dicted*
 mon standard of beauty is generally re- *why*
 strained to those external attractions: but
 since personal grace and the engaging
passions, although they cannot be deli-
 neated, have a more universal and uni-
 form power, it is no wonder people, in re-
 signing their hearts, so often contradict
 the common received standard. Accord-
 ingly, as the engaging passions and the
 address are discovered in conversation, the
 tender attachments of people are generally
 fixed by an intercourse of sentiment, and
 seldom by a transient view, except in ro-
 mances and novels. It is further to be
 observed, that when once the affections
 are fixed, a new face with a higher degree
 of

of beauty will not always have a higher degree of power to remove them, because our affections arise from a source within ourselves, as well as from external beauty; and when the tender passion is attached by a particular object, the imagination surrounds that object with a thousand ideal embellishments that exist only in the mind of the lover.

*History
of the
short
Life
of Beauty*

The history of the short life of beauty may be collected from what I have said. In youth that borders on infancy, the passions are in a state of vegetation, they only appear in full bloom in maturity; for which reason the beauty of youth is no more than the dawn and promise of future beauty. The features, as we grow into years, gradually form along with the mind: different sensibilities gather into the countenance, and become beauty there, as colours mount in a tulip, and enrich it. When the eloquent force and delicacy of sentiment

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 81

has continued some little time, age begins to stiffen the features, and destroy the engaging variety and vivacity of the countenance; the eye gradually loses its fire, and is no longer the mirror of the agreeable passions. Finally, old age furrows the face with wrinkles, as a barbarous conqueror overturns a city from the foundation, and transitory beauty is extinguished.

Beauty and elegance are nearly related, their difference consists in this, that elegance is the image of the mind displayed in motion and deportment; beauty is an image of the mind in the countenance and form; consequently beauty is of a more fixed nature, and owes less to art and habit.

*Beauty,
2nd
Elegance
their
difference.*

When I speak of beauty, it is not wholly out of my way to make a singular observation on the tender passion in our species. Innocent and virtuous

*Love:
its effects*

G

love

on our
Species.

love casts a beautiful hue over human nature; it quickens and strengthens our admiration of virtue, and our detestation of vice; it opens our eyes to our imperfections, and gives us a pride in excelling; it inspires us with heroic sentiments, generosity, a contempt of life, a boldness for enterprise, chastity, and purity of sentiment. It takes a similitude to devotion, and almost deifies the object of passion. People whose breasts are dulled with vice, or stupified by nature, call this passion romantic love; but when it was the mode, it was the diagnostic of a virtuous age. These symptoms of heroism, spring from an obscure principle, that in a noble mind unites itself with every passionate view in life; this nameless principle is distinguished by endowing people with extraordinary powers and enthusiasm in the pursuit of their favourite wishes, and by disgust and disappointment when we arrive at the point where our wishes seem to be completed. It has made great

They
spring
from 2
nameless
principles;
the source
of Enthu.
-5275m.

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 83

conquerors despise dangers and death in their way to victory, and sigh afterwards when they had no more to conquer.

From external beauty we come to the charms of conversation and writing. Words, by representing ideas, become the picture of our thoughts, and communicate them with the greatest fidelity. But they are not only the signs of sensible ideas, they exhibit the very image and distinguishing likenesses of the mind that uses them.

Conversation does not require the same merit to please that writing does. The human soul is endued with a kind of natural expression, which it does not acquire. The expression I speak of consists in the significant modulations and tones of voice, accompanied, in unaffected people, by a propriety of gesture. This native language was not intended by nature to represent the transitory ideas that come

Charms
of
Conver-
sation
re

Conversatn
a kind
of natural
Expression

2
modulation,
2nd Ges.
-ture
giving
life, 2nd
passion
to words.

by the senses to the imagination, but the passions of the mind and its emotions only; therefore modulation and gesture give life and passion to words; their mighty force in oratory is very conspicuous: but although their effects be milder in conversation, yet they are very sensible; they agitate the soul by a variety of gentle sensations, and help to form that sweet charm that makes the most trifling subjects engaging. This fine expression, which is not learned, is not so much taken notice of as it deserves; because it is much superseded by the use of artificial and acquired language. The modern system of philosophy has also concurred to shut it out from our reflections.

It is in conversation people put on all their graces, and appear in the lustre of good-breeding. It is certain ^{ly} good-breeding that sets so great a distinction between

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 85

between individuals of the same species, creates nothing new (I mean a good education) but only draws forth into prospect with skill and address the agreeable dispositions and sentiments that lay latent in the mind. You may call good-breeding artificial; but it is like the art of a gardener, under whose hand a barren tree puts forth its own bloom, and is enriched with its specific fruit. It is scarce possible to conceive any scene so truly agreeable as an assembly of people elaborately educated, who assume a character superior to ordinary life, and support it with ease and familiarity.

*Good-
breeding
only draws
forth the
latent
sentiments
of the Mind;
its
Charms.*

The heart is won in conversation by its own passions. Its pride, its grandeur, its affections, lay it open to the enchantment of an insinuating address. Flattery is a gross charm; but who is proof against a gentle and yielding disposition, that infers your superiority with a

*the
Heart
is Conquer'd
- is soon won
* by its
own Passions.*

G 3

delicacy

- * The feast of Reason, & the flow of Souls.
- * Even the Wise will condescend to taste a Bit.

delicacy so fine, that you cannot see the lines of which it is composed? Generosity, disinterestedness, a noble love of truth that will not deceive, a feeling of the distresses of others, and greatness of soul, inspire us with admiration along with love, and take our affections as it were by storm; but above all, we are seduced by a view of the tender and affectionate passions; they carry a soft infection, and the heart is betrayed to them by its own forces. If we are to judge from symptoms, the soul that engages us so powerfully by its reflected glances, is an object of infinite beauty. I observed before, that the modulations of the human voice that express the soul, move us powerfully; and indeed we are affected by the natural emotions of the mind expressed in the simplest language: in short, the happy art that in conversation and the intercourse of life, lays hold upon our affections, is but a just address

*The Art
of Conversation
noting
moving
2 proper
2 address*

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 87

address to the engaging passions in the human breast. But this syren power like beauty is the gift of Nature.

*to the
amiable
passions.*

Soft pleasing speech, and graceful outward show,

No arts can gain them, but the gods bestow.

POPE'S HOM.

From the various combinations of the several endearing passions and lofty sentiments, arise the variety of pleasing characters that beautify human society.

There is a different source of pleasure in conversation from what I have spoken of, called wit; which diverts the world so much, that I cannot venture to omit it, although delicacy and a refined taste hesitate a little, and will not allow its value to be equal to its currency. Wit deals largely in allusion and whimsical similitudes; its countenance is always double, and it unites the true and the

*Ready
wit
of Cicer-
o's
whet.
Eur-
peleia*

fantastic by a nice gradation of colouring that cannot be perceived. You observe that I am only speaking of the ready wit of conversation.

*Its
proper
use.*

Wit is properly called in to support a conversation, where the heart or affections are not concerned; and its proper business is to relieve the mind from solitary inattention, where there is no room to move it by passion; the mind's eye, when disengaged, is diverted by being fixed upon a vapour, that dances, as it were, on the surface of the imagination, and continually alters its aspect: the motley image, whose comic side we had only time to survey, is too unimportant to be attentively considered, and luckily vanishes before we can view it on every side. Shallow folks expect that those who diverted them in conversation, and made happy *bon mots*, ought to write well; and imagine that they themselves were made

*Men
of his
turn*

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 89

made to laugh by the force of genius: but they are generally disappointed when they see the admired character descend upon paper. The truth is, the frivolous turn and habit of a comic companion, is almost diametrically opposite to true genius, whose natural exercise is deep and slow-paced reflection. You may as well expect that a man should like Cæsar form consistent schemes for subduing the world, and employ the principal part of his time in catching flies. I have often heard people express a surprise, that Swift and Addison, the two greatest masters of humour of the last age, were easily put out of countenance, as if pun, mimickry, or repartee, were the offspring of genius.

*seldom
good
writers.*

*essily
put out
of Countenance.*

Whatever similitude may be between humour in writing, and humour in conversation, they are generally found to require different talents. Humour in writing is the offspring of reflection, and is by nice touches and labour brought

*Humour
in
Writing.
2nd
wit*

to

*in Con-
vulsion
Requie
different
talents.*

to wear the negligent air of nature; whereas, wit in conversation is an enemy to reflection, and glows brightest when the imagination flings off the thought the moment it arises, in its genuine new-born dress. Men a little elevated by liquor seem to have a peculiar facility at striking out the capricious and fantastie images that raise our mirth; in fact, what we generally admire in follies of wit, is the nicety with which they touch upon the verge of folly, indiscretion, or malice, while at the same time they preserve thought, subtlety, and good-humour; and what we laugh at is the motly appearance, whose whimsical consistency we cannot account for.

*Wit
pleases
by re-
laxing*

People are pleased at wit for the same reason that they are fond of diversion of any kind, not for the worth of the thing, but because the mind is not able to bear an intense train of thinking; and yet the ceasing of thought is insufferable, or rather

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 91

ther impossible. In such an uneasy dilemma, the unsteady excursions of wit give the mind its natural action, without fatigue, and relieve it delightfully, by employing the imagination without requiring any reflection. Those who have an eternal appetite for wit, like those who are ever in quest of diversion, betray a frivolous minute genius, incapable of thinking.

*Je
Mind,
yet em-
-playing
Je Im-
-ginstr*

Fine writing is but an easy picture of nature, as it arises to view upon the imagination. It is the expression of our first thoughts, or at least of what ought to be so; and we are surprised in the most celebrated writings, to find that they are wholly familiar to us, and seem to be exactly what we ourselves think and would say; and bad writers seem to have been under some restraint, that put them out of a path that lay directly before them. Would you not then think, that fine writing should be very common?

*viii
Fine
writing
2n essay
picture
of Nature
flowing
from Je
Imagtr.*

But

But I must pray you to recollect, that ele-
Elegance gance, though it consists chiefly in pro-
2d trained priety and ease, yet it is attained by very
by very few. I have already intimated the reason:
few, why. true taste and sentiment lie deep in the
 mind, often incorporated with prejudices;
 and it requires vast judgment to bring
 the beauteous ore to light, and to refine
 it. I should not be impartial and candid,
learning if I did not own to you that learning,
frequently in much the greater part of mankind, dis-
distorts torts the genius as much as laced stays do
the genius. the body; oppresses the natural seeds of
2nd propriety and beauty in the imagination;
incap2. and renders men ever incapable of writing
excites or even thinking well. When you ex-
for cept a few men of distinguished talents,
writing ladies both write and speak more agree-
well. ably than scholars. If you ask me the
 reason of this, I must inform you, that
 the easy and natural excursions of the
 imagination are seldom checked in ladies;
 while the enslaved pupils of colleges and
 schools in tender youth are forced into

x *Pupils of 2 Bell.* awkward
(Cowley)

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 93

aukward imitations, or dreary ungrateful tracts, where genius or beauty were never seen. The manner of the ancient schools was to learn by such familiar conversations as you have at times engaged in; by which means, instead of forcing a nauseous draught of learning upon youth, their genius was charmed forth by curiosity and emulation; the latent powers of the mind were gently unbound; and the generous ardor and pleasure that ran originally through their enquiries, gave a warmth, a genuine turn and natural beauty to their ideas. Can there be a stronger proof that learning has taken a wrong bias, than that the present common sense of mankind has judged learning in conversation to be pedantic and ill-breeding? Whereas the soul has a thirst for knowledge, which no mode can take away; and it is no more in the power of fashion to eradicate the charms and desires of curiosity, than the sense of beauty.

*Je
ancient
manner
of teaching
by Dis-
-logues
its
advantage.
Learning
has taken
a wrong
bias.*

beauty. There is a truth which I would strongly inculcate, and which is intimated throughout this little discourse; it is, that most people have more light, judgment, and genius latent within their breasts by far than they are able to draw forth or employ; that the utmost skill and address is requisite to tune those fine strings of the soul, if I may call them so, and bring into execution the harmony they are capable of; and that the perfection of those powers, whatever they be, is the highest degree of improvement to which any person's genius can attain.

✓
c2p2.
-ious
powers
folded
up in
Man.

Writing
of Letters
requisites
unaffected
grace,
and propriety—

Letters of business, of compliment, and friendship, form generally the compass of a lady's writing; for which, perhaps, the best rule that can be given is to neglect all rules. The same unaffected grace and propriety which animate your actions and conversation, cannot fail to charm universally upon paper: when

your

(x what high capacious powers
lie folded up in Man. [Akenside]

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 95

your style has taken the familiar turn and easy spirit of your words, and rejected the air of premeditation that steals in upon study, then will it be agreeable beyond imagination; turns of wit and compliment, that come without being sought for, are very pleasing in this familiar composition, that approaches so near to discourse; but they ought to be such as might pass with grace in conversation.

Shall we attempt to distinguish the most remarkable excellencies of the writings of the great men who have passed through life before us, and form clear ideas of those beauties that must charm mankind to the end of the world? Writing is but the conversation of absent people; let us consider it in this familiar light; we have little to do with criticism; which is a perfect art; we are only travellers in a tour of pleasure, who are taking a cursory view of the most distinguished beauties

Writing

no more

Taste

crushtn

of absent

people.

beauties of writing; we may walk with great pleasure in a flower-garden, and cheer the eye with the gay tincts of roses and lilies, without the minute knowledge of a botanist or florist.

*Je
Mind
in 1822.
-ding
in 2
state
between
curious,
2nd re.
-flection*

Writers, as I observed, are absent acquaintance; and the beauties of writing are no other than the qualities that would charm us in an agreeable friend, at an hour when the soul is thoughtful and inquisitive; for the mind in reading seems to be in a middle state, between conversation and reflection. It has not the levity of conversation; its attention to the weight of thought is not diverted by gesticulation; nor yet is it in so high a tone, as in pensive solitude.

You require it as an absolute condition, previous to any kind of familiarity, that the persons you converse with have a strict attention to truth, to honesty, and decency:

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 97

decency : and the same attention is absolutely necessary in writings destined to please succeeding ages. It is true, that some writers amongst the moderns have had the presumption to draw their pens in defiance to truth and decency, and have taken characters as writers, which they themselves would despise in an acquaintance. Deists, while they have expressed the highest veneration and respect for revelation, have taken infinite pains to undermine and expose it by oblique and covert means. Nothing but the caprice of mode, and an unaccountable blindness that attends a present mode, could hinder them from observing the unworthiness of their conduct, and the baseness of mind they betray ; or make them imagine that fame will attend on prevarication, and a sly deceit in writing, which is abject and infamous in life, and will for ever be the mark of a contemptible character. In this tract of

H

vile

*Atten-
-tion
to Truth,
honesty,
2nd de.
-cency,
necessary
to Writers
who seek
for
lasting
fame.*

* Tut2 frequensq; via per amici fallere nomen;
Tut2 frequensq; licet si sit, - Crimen habet.

vile duplicity and prostitution of heart have trod Hobbes, Shaftesbury, Bolingbroke, and some authors, French and English, now alive, who being still in the lists, and capable of seeking fame by generous and liberal methods, I shall not name. The strange manner and the artifice of these writers at first surprize; but the human heart, that naturally detests dishonesty, refuses them fame; and in half an age they are considered only as the patrons of licentiousness; and to make their infamy remarkable, they are only remembered and honoured by the vicious.

To mention. Decency is the habit which a noble train
The habit of thinking fixes upon the mind; and
of the it is related to religion, because religion
noble mind. more than any other object ennobles our
related ideas. Piety is eminently necessary in a
to Religion writer who is a candidate for the fame
 of ages. Instead of quoting Quintilian
 and

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 99

and Tully in proof of my assertion, who certainly understood the qualifications of a good writer as well as any modern gentlemen, and were not prejudiced by christianity, I will lay open the reason of it. The ideas of religion are all vast and affecting; and they open to the mind prospects by far more grand than those of this life. How does the mind expand to grasp an idea of eternity, infinity, or omnipresence? What sublime dignity does the intercourse of the deity bestow on the human state? If you look into Milton's Paradise Lost, you will be sensible what grand ideas even hell has furnished the poet with. * Enthusiasm is the very soul of poetry, and there is such an indissoluble connection between them, that the same word in the learned languages was indifferently applied to a poet and to a prophet. Now, madam, let the ideas of religion be thrown out of doors, what can be substituted in

Piety
necessz.
-y to 2
candidate
for the
fame of
Ages.
Endu:
-siasm
the Soul
of Poetry.

* *Mens*
divinior.
Horat.
+ *θεος δε*
μολεν φρεσιν
οιους
θεοποιος
αυς φουσευ.
Hom. Od. 22.

* *vates*

H 2

their

* *Boni Poeta non sxx Arte, st Numine*
afflati - bona poemata faciunt.
Plato Dialog: Io. x

- *σοφας ο πολ-*
-λα ειδως φουκ. Pindar.
Poeta nascitur non fit.

their stead? Wit, humour, and raillery are pleasing in the levities and play-hours of the soul; but they must not pretend to admiration, which attends only on elevation and grandeur of thought.

*Enthu-
siasm
in some
degree
insep-
arable
from the
mind of
Man.*

Enthusiasm, more or less, is an inseparable appendage of the mind of man. The novel projectors in philosophy and religion may ridicule it, and seriously exclaim against the folly of it; but they only quarrel with nature; which, after all, right or wrong, will form our pleasures and pains. If they could, by their prescriptions, amend and alter her laws, then might men take their plan into consideration: but since nature is inflexible, and will continue the same notwithstanding their fine projects of improvement, they are but idle vain prattlers; and such is the partiality of nature on this head, that the mind of man is incapable of any exalted pleasure that charms the soul in

its

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 101

its hours of reflection, or that brings beauty to the dwelling of thought, unless it be enthusiastic and beyond life. I do not plead for the manifest abuses of enthusiasm, no more than I do for the exorbitancies and ungoverned fallies of any other passion or appetite; I only mean, that we are as much bound down by fate to receive our sublime pleasures by it, as we are obliged to find beauty in the human form. Now religion, particularly revelation, or an intercourse between God and man, is the very essence of natural Enthusiasm. Homer, Virgil, and Milton, were so sensible of this truth, that with the fairest endowment of natural genius and rapture that ever enriched mankind, they would not venture on any thing worthy of universal admiration, without introducing an actual revelation, and raising the subject by the grand ideas peculiar to religion.

*Religion
the essence
of natu-
- r2l
Enthusiasm*

x The world is inferior to The
the soul; and there is 2 more
2 mple greatness, - 2 more exzel
Goodness, - and 2 more 2bsolute
variety, - 2 gre2ble to the spirit of
man, than can be found in the nature
of things. Id. Bacon's Advancement of Learn. B. 2. p. 163.

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*Entu.
isism
in some
degree
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rable
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mind of
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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 101

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 orbitancies and ungoverned sallies of any
 other passion or appetite; I only mean,
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 fate to receive our sublime pleasures by it,
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revelation, and raising the subject by the
grand ideas peculiar to religion.

*Religion
 & essence
 of natu-
 - r2l
 Enthusiasm*

* The world is ^{H2} inferior to The
 the soul; and there is 2 more
 2mple greatness - 2 more exact
 Goodness - and 2 more absolute
 variety, - agreeable to the spirit of
 man, than can be found in the nature
 of things. Id. Bacon's Advancem^t of Learn. B. 2 p. 463.

*Passports
of 2
writer
whet.*

The general air of truth, honesty, and decency are the passports of a writer; without which he can have no pretence to the esteem of readers of worth. Let us now consider the qualifications that render an author an interesting and admired companion of our leisure hours.

To wpos.

*J
5 4/10
Lion of
whet.*

The first and noblest source of delight in works of genius, without competition, arises from the sublime. The sublime, by an authority which the soul is utterly unable to resist, takes possession of our attention, and of all our faculties, and absorbs them in astonishment. The passion it inspires us with is evidently a mixture of terror, curiosity, and exultation: but they are stamped with a majesty, that bestows on them a different air and character from those passions on any other occasion. In the sublime we feel ourselves alarmed, our motions are suspended, and we remain for some time until the emo-

tion
+ *Exaltation i.e. Rapture, Ecstasy,
réveillement, transport d'Esprit.
tressaillement de Cœur.*

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 103

tion wears off, wrapped in silence and in-
quisitive horror.

The combination of passions in the sublime, render the idea of it obscure. No doubt the sensation of fear is very distinct in it; but it is equally obvious, that there is something in the sublime more than this abject passion. In all other terrors the soul loses its dignity, and as it were shrinks below its usual size: but at the presence of the sublime, although it be always awful, the soul of man seems to be raised out of a trance; it assumes an unknown grandeur; it is seized with a new appetite, that in a moment effaces its former little prospects and desires; it is rapt out of the sight and consideration of this diminutive world, into a kind of gigantic creation, where it finds room to dilate itself to a size agreeable to its present nature and grandeur: it overlooks the Appenines, and

*Idea
of it
obscure
different
from
all other
things.
how;*

the clouds upon them, and sees nothing in view around it but immense objects. In the poets language it flies, it soars, it
 * pursues a beauty in the madness of rapture, that words or description cannot contain; and if these expressions be extravagant and improper in the ordinary commerce of life, they yet exactly describe the intellectual and real state of the mind at the presence of the sublime.

*The greatest
 writers
 have failed
 in describing
 the Origin
 and Nature
 of the
 Sublime* The sublime enters into the principles of taste with such distinction, and rules the human spirit with such absolute sovereignty, that I would fain discover the origin and nature of its power; but fate seems to have covered it over with mystery, the greatest writers have either stopped short, or failed in the attempt, and I am safe enough although I turn aside, and leave it in the sacred obscurity in which it has so long been veiled: however, I may, by an hypothesis,

* *The Poets Eye, in a fine
 Phrenzy rolling. Shakesp.*

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 105

pothesis, attempt to give you an intelligible idea of the manner in which it affects us; I have a licence from custom for doing so; for I must inform you, that modern philosophers often take the liberty of forming systems merely for the sake of illustration, and to resolve difficulties, without thinking themselves obliged to give a demonstration of the truth of their system. If it tends to make that conceivable which was before inconceivable; the inventors suppose that they have done some service to science.

The system I am going to lay before you, is that of a friend of mine, who was a true lover of knowledge. He found little satisfaction in the philosophy of colleges and schools, particularly in those enquiries he thought of most importance: he had withdrawn himself from the trifling bustle of the little world, to converse with

Hyp'tss
...
of —

with his own heart, and end a stormy life in obscure quiet. One day after dinner, we walked out to indulge on our favourite topics. Our excursion terminated at a rock, whose base is washed by the Western Ocean. It was one of those fine days in August, when the cool of the evening brought on a refreshing sweetness. We sat down to rest, and enjoy the prospect of the sea, that stretched before us beyond the limits of the eye. The sun was just setting, and his last softened beams flying to the shore, seemed to dip in a thousand waves, and leave in the waters the blaze they lost. We had been reading Homer on our way to the sea-side. When we sat down, our conversation turned on the strange power of the sublime. It is easy, says the thoughtful philosopher, to describe the impressions the sublime makes on the mind, and this is all the writers on this subject have hitherto

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 107

hitherto done with any success ; but is it impossible, from a due attention to the symptoms, to unravel its meaning, and discover the spring of the silent and inquisitive astonishment it impresses on the spirit of man ? I am sensible a just explication of the sublime must account for all its effects, as well for the noble elevation and the charming rapture, as for the terror it bestows. If I can produce a cause that accounts sufficiently for all the symptoms, and no other can be given, then mine ought by all rules of good reasoning to be admitted for the true one, however novel it appears.

In order to proceed to the discovery we desire to make, let us turn our views to objects remarkably sublime, and from them obtain what intelligence we can. Observe this mountain that rises so high on the left, if we had been farther removed from it, you might see behind it
other

other mountains rising in strange confusion, the farthest off almost lost in the distance, yet great in the obscurity, your imagination labours to travel over them, and the inhabitants seem to reside in a superior world. But here you have a different prospect, the next mountain covers all the rest from your view, and by its nearer approach, presents distinctly to your eye objects of new admiration. The rocks on its sides meet the clouds in vast irregularity; the pensive eye traces the rugged precipice down to the bottom, and surveys there the mighty ruins that time has mouldered and tumbled below. It is easy in this instance to discover that we are terrified and silenced into awe, at the *vestiges* we see of immense power; and the more manifest are the appearances of disorder, and the neglect of contrivance, the more plainly we feel the boundless might these rude monuments are owing to. But besides

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 109

fides this silent fear, we feel our curiosity roused from its deepest springs in the soul; and while we tremble, we are seized with an exquisite delight, that attends on sublime objects only. The same mixed sensation weighs upon us, when we see an ocean disturbed and agitated in storms; or a forest roaring, and bending under the force of the tempest. We are struck by it with more calmness, but equal grandeur, in the starry heavens: the silence, the unmeasured distance, and the unknown power united in that prospect, render it very awful in the deepest serenity. Thunder, with broken bursts of lightning through black clouds; the view of a cataract, whose billows fling themselves down with eternal rage; or the unceasing sound of the falling waters by night; the howling of animals in the dark: all these produce the sublime, by the association of the idea of invisible immense power.

The

The soul of man naturally pays homage to unseen power. He feels obscure hopes, and obscure fears, which become a religious passion, and distinguish him more than any other difference between him and the other inhabitants of the earth. The religious passion, attended with less tumult, but more constancy than the other passions, calls upon his heart in the majesty of darkness and silence, and is the source of the sublime sensation we are treating of. I see several objections crouding to your mind against my hypothesis; but hear me out, for I intend to obviate them all.

The object of the religious passion is no idea, it is unknown; therefore the passion itself is obscure, and wants a name; but its effects are very remarkable, for they form the peculiar character of human nature. Curiosity and hope carry with them the plainest symptoms of a

** Causa latet, vis est* passion
notissim2.

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. III

passion that wanders, and is astray for its object. In their anxious search, they unite themselves with every great prospect in life, whose completion lies in the dark : but when we arrive at the point we proposed, we are fully sensible that curiosity and hope have been deceived, the enjoyment in our power whatever it be, falls infinitely below our expectations, yet the alacrity of the mind feels no decay by disappointment ; we set out immediately with renewed vigour in pursuit of something farther, and nothing but death puts an end to the anxiety. These passions are exceedingly alarmed, at the appearances of the excessive power that gives us the idea of the sublime. In the disorder and confusion of seas in storms, or when lofty woods struggle with high winds, we are struck with an humiliating awe, surprize, and suspense : the mind views the effects of boundless power with still amazement : it recoils upon itself

in

*x Hope travels on, nor leaves
us when we die.*

in a passion made up of terror, joy, and rapture, and feels in sentiment these questions: *Who is the author of this? What is he to me? Is he the object of my eternal curiosity, of my mighty fears, and hopes?* I appeal to the feelings of every man, if his passions in these circumstances be not exactly applicable to this confused interested state of mind, whether he disentangles or reflects on his own ideas or no.

There is nothing more disputed than the origin of the idea of divinity. All nations, however barbarous, have it; and our latest discoveries prove that the relations of atheist nations are all fabulous, and that the savages of every quarter of the globe look up to a supernatural power. From the universality of the idea, men who did not sufficiently examine its origin suspected, and actually taught, that we had an innate idea of God. The grossness

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 113

grossness and want of precision with which they advanced this doctrine, afforded Mr. Locke the happiest opportunity imaginable of triumphing over them, and of deducing religion and the idea of the deity from sensible ideas, and from the mere agency of reason, agreeable to his general system. It is true, we have not an innate idea of God; but we a thousand times feel the intruded influence of a mighty, unknown power, that must, by the unavoidable transition the mind makes from the effect to the cause, give rise to the idea of divine power. Sensible ideas, indeed, and the passing shew of this external world, divert the attention of the mind from its religious feelings; but as sensible ideas recede from the imagination, and leave us to a solitary intellectual state of mind, we find an awful and obscure presence surround us, that bestows on the soul an elevation and enthusiasm that do not attend on external ideas.

All mankind, whose common sense is not diverted by system, will agree, that darkness, solitude, and silence, naturally oppress the mind by a tremendous and sublime sensation. It is further evident, that they produce not this effect by any active power of their's, but merely by stripping the imagination of its sensible ideas, of the noise, the mirth, and light that diverted its attention, and leaving it to its naked state and feelings; consequently, that the great influence that then rises upon the soul, and dwells upon it in terrors, is the effect of a power that has been always present to it, altho' it has not been always observed, on account of the interposition of the transitory ideas of sense. In short, it appears from a great variety of observations, and reflected lights, that the human soul is always oppressed by a mighty presence, whose obscurity and stillness only keep it out of our attention when the mind is employed

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 115

employed on exterior objects. To avoid this awful presence it is, that we for ever seek amusement and company, and that any diversion, however insipid and trifling in itself, becomes to us a pleasing relief, merely by taking up our attention. Reason smiles at the puerility of our amusements. The very slaves of pleasure hold them in contempt, and acknowledge they will not bear examination: yet the wise, and the vain find solitude alike insupportable, and alike desire the company, and diversion they despise.

Because the philosophers of our days can assign no form, nor size, nor colour, to the object of their sublime awe, they conclude it to be vain and superstitious: they take upon them to decide positively, that nature in the formation of the human mind has acted an unmeaning part: and where she appears remarkably solemn and regular, in her noblest production,

has been absurd and puerile. Her vast sagacity, and the design that always appears in her works of a lower order, ought surely to procure her a degree of confidence, and give some suspicions that she did not act wholly at random in the plan of the human mind. The truth is, the impression of this obscure presence, however it be felt, is beyond the verge of the philosophy of the ideas of sense. The disciplines of this philosophy cannot upon their principles admit that an object which neither the memory can treasure up, nor the imagination form, has been present to the mind. They are not able to conceive that an object has been there which was not represented by a sensible idea, and which makes itself felt only by its influence. But let it be considered, however the consequences may clash with this, or that system, that awe is a relative idea, and bears as necessary a relation to something either ideal or intellectual that impresses
terror,

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 117

terror, as vision does to something seen. Let it be further attended to, that the awe which surrounds us in solitude, in deep silence, and in darkness, is not acquired by habit, by association, religious tenets, or prejudices; seeing that it is not confined to particular nations or ages, but that it is inseparable from the human race at all æras of time, be their religion what it will; and that those men who have most effectually cast off the weaknesses of the human kind, have discovered the plainest symptoms of the awe I speak of: but we must carefully distinguish between common accidental fear, and this noble sensation that elevates whilst it over-awes. Men often bear silence, solitude, and night, without distinct or ideal fear, such as is occasioned by tales of ghosts, or goblins: but the still important attention, and solemn swell of mind, that is a concomitant of obscurity, of loneliness, and of deep silence, appears

by the writings, and sentiments of the greatest of mankind, to be an involuntary, and universal impression on the intellect. It is not, as Mr. Locke says, that the tales of nurses have made night the scene of terrors; but that the solemnity and real awfulness of the night, has made it the natural scene of frightful tales and apparitions in all nations. It is to meet the sublime impression undisturbed, the poet retires to the solitary walks of the country; that he seeks for vales hid from human eye, where silence seems to take up her dwelling; and loves to frequent the woods covered with darkness and shade: there he feels, with all the certainty of intuition, the presence of the universal genius, whose immediate influence tunes his voice to music, and fires the imagination to rapture. All the ideas that arrive to the mind by the ordinary avenues of sense, are the objects of common apprehension and discourse;

but

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 119

but in the presence of the universal genius, ^x those ideas grow brighter than the gilding of the sun can make them, and put on a strange beauty that belong not to them. It is the beauty of a being, indistinct, and hid as it were in light, which the imagination in vain seeks to lay hold of: whence you may conceive the distress, that obliges the poet to fly from image to image, to express what he feels. No idea, however grand, answers his purpose; yet as he feels strongly, he still hopes, and rushes to snatch into view another grand prospect. The variety of his efforts shews the object the mind labours with to be different from any thing we know; to be beyond the power of utterance; and yet the very labour and confusion of images, and the despair he betrays, paint sufficiently the poet's perception; and we are sensible of what he cannot express, because we all feel it in our own bosoms.

I 4

The

x Jupiter est quodcumq; vides.

The sublime influence of groves and lonely vales is not fantastic, or a work of the imagination: it is a most constant, uniform effect in the same circumstances; and the change it makes in our ideas, or rather the creation of new beauty it bestows on them, which was never had from sense; and the mighty powers it bestows on us, are evidently supernatural. To say that the inspiration of poetry, and enthusiasm, which are the most surprizing and violent effects we know of, are produced by a *non-entity*, or by the native force of the imagination, is utterly unphilosophic and absurd. It is further manifest, upon reflection, that the supernatural presence is not confined to wood or dale; not to these long mountains beside us; nor to the winding shores, and hollow seas: it always meets the pensive meditating mind; in the remotest parts of the earth we are at no distance from it, and in the darkness of night

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 121

night it possesses us. Say, ye stars of heaven, almost lost in immense distance, does not the Father of Being sustain and cherish worlds around you, who receive life and rapture from his presence?

If the universal spirit had not always dwelt in the soul, enthusiasm would not be infectious, nor could fanatic preachers communicate it at all times to their audience. The enthusiastic orator expresses his own feelings, and his discourse is infectious; not by the production of any new and foreign passion, but by fixing the attention to the great sensations of the soul. If they were not there before, the preacher could no more raise them, than he could give a man born blind the idea of colours. Persons of a religious and solitary cast of thought often experience these inspirations, when prayer or meditation have led the soul into retirement, and taken external ideas
out

out of its attention: and the religious fanatic experiences the same divine favour that the poet does in his gloomy forest, or beside his consecrated stream. The sagacious ancients were so sensible of the identity of the spirit that inspired both, that they gave the same appellation to the prophet, and poet, as I said before.

When we have carried our views thus far, it is easy to discover the springs of polytheism. The imagination found the divine idea rising before it in a variety of circumstances, and worshipped it under the several distinctions in which it appeared. The Greeks, the fathers of thought, and sublime knowledge, always nicely observed the difference between the native powers of the mind over its stock of sensible ideas, and the sublime influence to which it was passive. They traced the latter through its various appearances, and never failed to attribute

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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 123

it to divine power; sometimes to the Muses, sometimes to Apollo, to the Furies, to Pan, to the Sylvan deities, and to the genius of the place; they never mistook the supernatural presence, but only divided it out, according as the imagination happened to be struck, and to the concomitant external ideas.

It was not fear made the gods, but God made his presence known by an awe that does not attend on sensible objects. If man falls down to worship in the groves, it is because the sacred impression he feels in solitude and obscurity makes him sensible of the presence of invisible power. From what I have just said, it is easy to conceive the reason why men educated in the country, and those especially whose employments are in the fields, are in general more religious than the inhabitants of towns and cities.

101

* *Primus in Orbe Deos
fecit Timor.* —

Terror

Terror is the first impression that meets us in the solitary presence; and the bulk of mankind have only feeling enough when they are alone to create uneasiness, and a confused gloom that drives them to seek for company and amusement; but men of more delicate sensations find admiration and extasy along with fear. Delight and fear are passions of almost opposite natures; yet they are united in this unknown object, in an immeasurable degree. By all the known rules of reasoning from mechanic principles, the fear of unknown power ought to be much more faint and dull than the fear of known power; and in men educated in doubt or disbelief of a future state, this fear of unknown power should be hardly perceptible, or active; and thus it would certainly be, if it were the issue of sensible ideas, or of reason: but in fact, all men who have leisure to observe their own internal sensations, find the terror

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 125

ror of unknown power far beyond all limits, and beyond all degrees of known evil. When we see the limits of evil, we immediately see that it loses a great deal in our imagination. Men easily bear imprisonment, poverty, sickness, and even great degrees of pain; but the obscure despair, whose object we know not, is blacker than the grave, and more terrible than death, and to plunge from it men commit suicide. Every calamity of this life is supportable, and we suffer them by choice rather than death, until they bring us to a pensive solitary state of mind, in which we feel the pressure of unknown power; and then men often make the cruel choice, and seek death as a welcome release from the gloomy terrors that sink them. Fanatic preachers make admirable use of this state of mind; for experience shews, that when melancholy has continued some time, and the soul seems to itself utterly

terly lost, secret fits of joy and transport beam in upon it through the gloom. Dealers in the spirit therefore take special care to raise enthusiastic terrors first in their followers, and to bring despair and reprobation full in the soul's view; under which some of them actually kill themselves; but as the mind cannot long remain in this state, and the intense possession of religious melancholy naturally turns to extasy and rapture, enthusiasts, from a state of despair, pass suddenly to a state of joy and transport, which is easily mistaken for election and the kind voice of the Divinity. It is lucky for fanatic preachers of all ages, that the bulk of mankind are ignorant, and incapable of observing, that the divine presence they boast of has been common to every religion; that religion only unites an universal passion to this or that set of doctrines and ideas; and that there is a systematic method of acquiring

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 127

ing the predestination and divine impulse they feel with great certainty.

The rapture of enthusiasm is as contradictory to all rules of reasoning from the received principles, as its fears. If it were the issue of our sensible ideas, and reflections made on them, it would never rise to the force of sensible beauty; and all the warmest imagination could do, is to make approaches to the charms of colours, and of form, and to the beauties of smell and taste. But the obscure unknown good that mortals seek with such anxiety is more than every joy and every good besides. It is the love-sick wish that brightens hope, the search of which makes us pass resolutely through all the evils of life. Shall I call it supreme beauty? This is but a figurative name, of that beauty of which we have no conception. But does not the want of conception make it indifferent to us? No;

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an intelligence clearer than sense, and stronger than reason, characterises it with rapture, and with inexpressible joy; and let us conceive of it as we will in theory, it is the load-stone to which the soul for ever tends with anxiety, in every unknown good and obscure prospect.

I observed before, that the remarkable curiosity and hope of our kind, are the symptoms of a wandering passion for a fugitive object necessary to our happiness that is for ever near us, and for ever hides from us; hence proceed the perpetual discontent and care that harbour in the human breast: for it is evident, that be our possessions what they will, we cannot be content while we desire or hope for any thing more than we possess; and that while this object of desire is unknown, the symptoms must be exactly what they are, and man's pursuits must be wild, inconsistent, and unsatisfied.

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 129

satisfied. This fond unknown object, on account of the vastness of the passion with which it is sought for, was by the antients called the *summum bonum*, or chief felicity. Whether there be such an enjoyment in reality or no, the phantom, or visionary expectation of it, is pursued by mortals with endless and unwearied care. It was a noble effort of human reason, bewildered in ignorance, to enquire for the object of its sublime hopes. One who has a clear idea of the meaning of the antients in this great enquiry, can hardly refrain from smiling at Mr. Locke's ludicrous explication of it. If the question had been what is the most delicious sate; or whether the best relish were to be found in apples, plumbs, or nuts; the preference undoubtedly ought to be given by every one to that which pleases him best; for there is no disputing tastes: but the question here is, what is the vast object

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of content and bliss, for which all mankind have one common passion, and which every one who is not employed to procure the necessaries of life, sets out in search of with crouded sails. The orphan mind, in its fond expectations, imagines it sees a confused view of it in the first ideas of every thing that is beautiful; until possession convinces us of our mistake; but no disappointments cure the passion itself; we are actuated by a sense more present to us than demonstration, that the object of it is always near us.

Man is ennobled and distinguished from the other inhabitants of this earth by the universal passion I speak of. If he were bereft of it, he would fall to the condition of a sagacious brute. He would, in such case, as soon as he had eaten and drank to satisfy nature, lie down on the next sunny bank, and repose in thoughtless content. We should have no heroes, no

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 131

misers, and no mighty projects. Human love, that now refines and ennobles the soul, would never rise beyond the brutal appetite. Happiness would be cheaply attained, and we should never be uneasy, but when in actual distress. But then our happiness would be poor and tasteless; and indeed the mere glimmering hope of the obscure enthusiastic delight which we never enjoy, with all its endless cares and disappointments, is infinitely more noble and ravishing, than the unbroken supine content of sensible enjoyment. What makes content sound so fine in the human ear, is the satiation of the mighty unknown want, which we are obliged to unite in our idea of content, because without it we can never enjoy undisturbed unwishing tranquillity. But this heart-easing, this gilded content, is not the content of brutes; for as they have no desires but to allay the present appetite, their ease is stupid indifference. The an-

nihilation of that bright-beaming human hope, that travels on before us during life, would be attended with a want of curiosity; nothing would be new to us, nor nothing old: we should run into few errors, and few cares; we should be wise, content, and worthless. Thus are our misery, our folly, and our grandeur, connected and inseparable.

I have given you, madam, this enthusiastic gentleman's rhapsody on the sublime, which I leave to your reflection, with this caution only, that before you judge, you consult the feelings of your own mind, in the same retired and calm state he did. I now proceed to a separate source of the sublime, which we discover in our own breasts, and observe with particular pleasure, because it is an undoubted evidence of the grandeur of human nature. I took some notice of it before, when I spoke of elegance.

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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 133

We find in ourselves a sense of the base and of the noble ; to the one are annexed by nature shame and blushes ; to the other, pride and exultation. We may indeed be cheated by appearances ; base actions may be disguised, or wholly covered from view, and lost in the concomitant circumstances ; but the sense itself is constantly true to appearances ; we are for ever prejudiced against the mean and base, and we alway exult in a noble and disinterested part. That this direction of the sentiment was not formed by the precepts of philosophers, or by the management of politicians, as sensual writers pretend, is evident from hence, that it is not in the power of art or management to alter or warp it. We can no more be brought to approve what appears to us base, or to condemn noble and benevolent actions, while they appear so, than we can be managed to like the

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screaming of the owl, or the jarring of iron bars.

It is this sentimental light without reflection which discovers to us, that it is great and exalted to condemn sensual pleasures, riches, and mundane interests; and makes severe, self-denying, suffering virtue appear an object of admiration. Generosity, even when ill-placed, is still noble, because it demonstrates a contempt for riches; and the love of truth is so, because it shews a settled firm habit of virtue; for falsehood is the disguise which shame bestows on vice.

The soul, actuated and determined by its own haughty and elevated sentiments of virtue and dignity, asserts fates and prospects superior to the low interests of this world. We are therefore charmed in the nobility of sentiment, by this clear and manifest majesty of the soul, just as
beauty

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 135

beauty is delighted with the flattering view of itself in a mirror. The elevation every man feels in himself at a noble sentiment, is a plain intuition of the sublimity of his own spirit, and on that account it strikes him with rapture and exultation. If all ages have acknowledged the grandeur of Alexander's answer to Parmenio, it is because men in general feel in themselves a loftier passion than that which can be satisfied with kingdoms and sceptres. If we should imagine that it was a mere passion for empire stimulated that great conqueror to his enterprizes, he himself informs us, with discontent, when he had no more to conquer, that he was not satisfied with empires and kingdoms. A passion to enjoy the sovereignty of the whole world had nothing admirable in it; but the noble dissatisfaction he expressed at the limits he found to his ambition, furnished an idea

to poets, to painters, and statuaries, to form a grand picture of the hero.

Next to the sublime, the passions form the most fruitful source of beauty in works of genius. The soul in passion displays resources that surprise by their novelty and greatness. It employs an ingenuity and light that is not within the reach of reason, and endues us with powers of execution far above our ordinary strength. From this sudden prospect of the extent and grandeur of the human spirit proceeds our attention to the workings of passion; we are eager to see it come forward in the tumult, and become visible on the countenance; and we find the discovery of its new powers of great importance to us. The passions are also strangely infectious; they lay hold on our affections by violence; they bear us away from a state of indifference, and plunge us into concern and emotion. The mind that be-
fore

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 137

fore rested upon itself selfish and alone, at the appearance of passion, in a moment feels its relation to mankind : it extends its feelings beyond ourselves, and finds itself irresistably engaged by the interests of others. The sense of this relation, and particularly of its compassion, which is an undoubted evidence of the grandeur and generosity of its own nature, delights it exceedingly, even in the midst of its distresses for the sorrows of others. The mixture of pity, of this sublime exultation, and the curiosity that naturally impels us to descry the workings and manœuvres of the soul in distress, form the noble pensive pleasure we feel at a tragedy, and the charm that engages us in a melancholy relation. The passions of brutes have little elevating or important in them ; but it is not so always in description, because in the description it is not the brute that is so much in view,

as

as the human mind and the human passions.

Another remarkable division of the beauties of fine writing consists in the imagery. Darkness, that strips the imagination of visible objects, becomes irksome and melancholy. Light, that restores the picture of nature, dissipates the gloom, and brings back joy along with it. The mind naturally abhors a solitary state, and finds relief and enjoyment in a variety and succession of objects, which accounts for the distinguished beauty of imagery in writing. The objects of description take life upon the imagination; a new creation arises in prospect, and we are charmed at the enchantment of words. Great writers always paint strongly their thoughts, and make them objects of view. You see Homer's heroes in action before you: when you begin to read him, you find yourself insensibly

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 139

sibly taken by the hand, and led where he
 has a mind to fix your attention. You tra-
 verse his fields of action, and almost fight
 his battles. Shakespeare preserves in his
 characters the same strong cast of feature and
 turn of mind from the first speech forward.
 You are acquainted with every one after
 the first appearance, and your attention is
 engaged as if you were amongst your friends,
 and busied in the transactions of neigh-
 bours. Almost every sentence in Mil-
 ton's poetic works is a picture. But it
 is necessary to observe, that in writing we
 are not so much moved by the exact pic-
 ture of real life, or of objects, as we are
 by the colouring and strokes of the ima-
 gination. To make myself understood,
 I must observe, that there is a greater
 sensibility in some men than in others;
 two persons see the same objects, the same
 misfortunes, with very different feelings;
 their descriptions may be equally exact,
 but with very different effects. A man
of

of sensibility finds words, and a language tender, passionate, and expressive of his feelings : you imagine he paints objects and actions, while he in reality paints passion, and affects us by the image of his own imagination. Great writers in fact seldom descend to a trivial exactness ; it is sufficient that they distinguish the objects they offer to view by some general lines, and then they move us by the enlivening sensations that touch us by sympathy. The poet, who calls your imagination to his beloved groves and crystal springs, does not distinguish his trees into oak, ash, or elm ; he shews them neither regularly nor in confusion ; nor does he measure the windings of his stream, nor mark out the fords, the shallows, and depths : he just mentions the rural scene, and then proceeds to paint the engaging image of calm content, and of easy unsurfeiting joys, that are not objects of sense, and yet are the
real

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 141

real objects of beauty. This animated expression is the very characteristic of great writers ; but it is not by any means confined to great and important subjects ; the most familiar ideas are equally capable of the tincture of sensibility. The flowing easy dress of the imagination, and the soft colouring the mind gives to common occurrences, are as becoming and beautiful over a lady's thoughts in her letters, as more studied and laboured painting in the composition of philosophers. It is not uncommon to find ladies paint finely in conversation, in the careless current of their thoughts ; and indeed the vivacity and delicacy of imagination peculiar to your sex, seem to have put this kind of charm into your hands. In the little remains of Sappho we see dangerous proofs of the enchantment of her painting ; and probably it is happy that the rest of the works of that ingenious Grecian lady are lost.

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These three, the sublime, the passions, and the imagery, form the distinguished beauty of works of genius; but colours may be too glaring, and beauty itself overcharged or misplaced. The imagery should never confuse the attention, or withdraw it from the main design. They should imitate dress, whose art it is not to hide, but to lead the eye to the object of dress. Different subjects require different ornaments; a plain habit becomes a philosopher or an ecclesiastic, but you may with great propriety dress a lady going to a ball in tissue and diamonds. You can hardly be too lavish of your roses on the mantle of spring; but you must leave the dreary heath its unvariegated dusky robe. Mixed images confound your view, and give you unformed separate parts, instead of just pictures. The passions must be governed with the same chastity: the language of the heart is plain, it is simple; it is expressed in a
few

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 143

few and unadorned words : but this simplicity, this plainness, is what men who feel not the passions find a difficulty to paint. To persuade you of their emotion, they rave and bluster like young players. It is one of Shakespeare's faults, that in the midst of his noblest distresses, he often introduces philosophic reflections, and descriptions that are generally very beautiful, but ill-placed. I do not take notice of this error to lower in your esteem this extraordinary genius, who knew human nature better than all the philosophers put together, and has given juster pictures of it ; but to guard you against the power of his charms, which are too apt to recommend his faults. It is from a great man we are to apprehend danger of being misled.

Besides the striking beauties I mentioned, a writer of genius is always distinguished by a strong impression of his
genius

genius and a propriety of colouring, which form his peculiar character, and animate his works. Ordinary writers repeat a language whose ideas have nothing particular to catch the attention: they are read, but become unobserved, like objects that we pass by in the dusk of the evening: but a great writer fixes the image of his imagination upon his thoughts. You see plainly he does not repeat words that he learned, and are in every one's mouth, but ideas just as they lay in his own mind.

The mastery of a writer, and the compass of his genius, appear conspicuously in two points; the propriety and justness of his style, and the unbroken continuation and advance of his design from the beginning to the conclusion. By propriety of style I do not mean an insipid evenness, and a murmur for ever returning upon the ear. The same waters
glide

glide gently through meadows, and fling themselves with tumult and bellowing over precipices. When in the course of a writer's subject he comes to lofty ideas, his tone of voice must become elevated and superior : or when he leads you to peaceful country prospects, his voice must be low like his reed ; but lofty or low, you must hear the same voice. The variations must not be like the strange transitions from a pipe to a trumpet, but like the same instrument perfectly in tune, that swells and falls into continued harmony. For the same reason he must avoid all harsh and dragged-in metaphors ; they break the tenor ; they disturb the view, and turn our thoughts upon the labour of the writer. If we had proper expressions for every idea, metaphors had never been thought of. It is necessity gives them currency ; and they should not be used but when they are stronger and clearer than any proper expression, and

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when they seem to drop off the imagination upon the paper. Besides a justness of style, a writer who aims at perfection, and desires to leave a solid pleasure on the mind, never suffers his attention to stray from his design; he always proceeds forward towards the goal, whether his pace be gentle and flowing, or impetuous and rapid. A view of separated or mutilated parts, however beautiful, leave a sensible want in the mind, which is naturally delighted with seeing the complete and whole union of design.

It is agreed upon by most writers of good taste, that the beauties of genius are only disposed with propriety when they adorn virtue; but the reason is not so generally understood: it is this, vice is for ever ignoble, base, and terminates in mundane gratifications; for which reason, that dress which is formed by our ideas of beauty and grandeur, or
by

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 147

by the noble sentiments that imply a superiority of soul, is manifestly misplaced in adorning vice, and is dishonestly stolen from the wardrobe of virtue. A love of sensuality cannot be noble or great, nor can any means used to justify or to inculcate it be great, noble, or virtuous. Wherefore, the beautiful language sometimes made use of by late writers for this purpose appears to be false and improper: when we read them, taste revolts against inclination, and discovers the imposture. In short, the fine attire bestowed on vice by genius, is like blooming garlands bound round a withered leafless tree.

I am going, madam, to dictate to ladies with an air of decision which I have nowhere else assumed, because the sentiment is yours; and indeed it may be easily distinguished by the delicacy. You remember the disgust you expressed at the affectation of learning in your own sex:

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I will

I will venture to unfold your thought, but you must not expect the same grace with which it fell from your lips.

A lady should rather appear to think well than to speak well of books: she may shew the engaging light that good taste and sensibility always diffuse over conversation; she may give instances of her sense of great and affecting passages, because they display the fineness of her imagination, or the goodness of her heart; but all criticism beyond this sits as awkwardly upon her as her grandfather's large spectacles. I would by all means have a lady know more than she displays, because it gives her unaffected powers in discourse, for the same reason that a man's efforts are easy and firm, when his action requires not his full strength. She should by habit form her mind to the noble and the pathetic; and she should have an acquaintance with the fine arts, because

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 149

cause they enrich and beautify the imagination; but she should carefully keep them out of view in the shape of learning, and let them run through the easy vein of unpremeditated thought: for this reason she should never use nor even understand the terms of art: the gentlemen will occasionally explain them to her. I knew a lady of vast address who when a term of art came to be mentioned, always turned to the gentleman she had a mind to compliment, and with uncommon grace asked him the meaning of it; by this means she gave men the air of superiority they like so well, while she held them in chains. No humour can be more delicate than this, which plays upon the tyrant, who requires an acknowledged superiority of sense as well as power from the weaker sex.

IX

There are few who have not felt the charms of music, and acknowledged its

expressions to be intelligible to the heart. It is a language of delightful sensations, that is far more eloquent than words : it breathes to the ear the clearest intimations ; but how it was learned, to what origin we owe it, or what is the meaning of some of its most affecting strains, we know not,

We feel plainly that music touches and gently agitates the agreeable and sublime passions ; that it wraps us in melancholy, and elevates in joy ; that it dissolves and inflames ; that it melts us in tenderness, and rouses to rage : but its strokes are so fine and delicate, that, like a tragedy, even the passions that are wounded please ; its sorrows are charming, and its rage heroic and delightful ; as people feel the particular passions with different degrees of force, their taste of harmony must proportionably vary. Music then is a language directed to the passions ; but the

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 151

the rudest passions put on a new nature, and become pleasing in harmony: let me add, also, that it awakens some passions which we perceive not, in ordinary life. Particularly the most elevated sensation of music arises from a confused perception of ideal or visionary beauty and rapture, which is sufficiently perceivable to fire the imagination, but not clear enough to become an object of knowledge. This shadowy beauty the mind attempts, with a languishing curiosity, to collect into a distinct object of view and comprehension; but it sinks and escapes, like the dissolving ideas of a delightful dream, that are neither within the reach of the memory, nor yet totally fled. The noblest charm of music then, though real and affecting, seems too confused and fluid to be collected into a distinct idea. Harmony is always understood by the croud, and almost always mistaken by musicians, who are, with hardly any ex-

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ception,

ception, servile followers of the taste of mode, and who having expended much time and pains on the mechanic and practical part, lay a stress on the dexterities of hand, which yet have no real value, but as they serve to produce those collections of sound that move the passions. The present Italian taste for music is exactly correspondent to the taste of tragedy, that about a century ago gained ground upon the stage. The musicians of the present day are charmed at the union they form between the grave and the fantastical, and at the surprising transitions they make between extremes, while every hearer who has the least remainder of the taste of nature left, is shocked at the strange jargon. If the same taste should prevail in painting, we must soon expect to see the woman's head, a horse's body, and a fish's tail, united by soft gradations, greatly admired at our public exhibitions. Musical gentlemen should
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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 153

take particular care to preserve in its full vigour and sensibility their original natural taste, which alone feels and discovers the true beauty of music.

If Milton, Shakespeare, or Dryden, had been born with the same genius and inspiration for music as for poetry, and had passed through the practical part without corrupting the natural taste, or blending with it a prepossession in favour of the flights and dexterities of hand, then would their notes be tuned to passions and to sentiments as natural and expressive as the tones and modulations of the voice in discourse. The music and the thought would not make different impressions: the hearers would only think impetuously; and the effect of the music would be to give the ideas a tumultuous violence and divine impulse upon the mind. Any person conversant with the classic poets, sees instantly that the passionate power

of music I speak of, was perfectly understood and practised by the antients; that the muses of the Greeks always sung, and their song was the echo of the subject, which swelled their poetry into enthusiasm and rapture. An enquiry into the nature and merits of the ancient music, and a comparison thereof with modern composition, by a person of poetic genius and an admirer of harmony, who is free from the shackles of practice, and the prejudices of the mode, aided by the countenance of a few men of rank, of elevated and true taste, would probably lay the present half-Gothic mode of music in ruins, like those towers of whose little laboured ornaments it is an exact picture, and restore the Grecian taste of passionate harmony once more, to the delight and wonder of mankind. But as from the disposition of things, and the force of fashion, we cannot hope in our time to rescue the sacred lyre, and see it

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 155.

put into the hands of men of genius, I can only recall you to your own natural feeling of harmony, and observe to you, that its emotions are not found in the laboured, fantastic, and surprizing compositions that form the modern style of music; but you meet them in some few pieces that are the growth of wild unvi-tiated taste; you discover them in the swelling sounds that wrap us in imaginary grandeur; in those plaintive notes that make us in love with woe; in the tones that utter the lover's sighs, and fluctuate the breast with gentle pain; in the noble strokes that coil up the courage and fury of the soul, or that lull it in confused visions of joy: in short, in those affecting strains that find their way to the inward recesses of the heart;

Untwisting all the chains that tie

The hidden soul of harmony.

MILTON,

Sculpture

X

Sculpture and painting have their standard in nature; and their principles differ only according to the different materials made use of in these arts. The variety of his colours, and the flat surface on which the painter is at liberty to raise his magic objects, give him a vast scope of ornament, variety, harmony of parts, and opposition, to please the mind, and divert it from too strict an examination. The sculptor, being so much confined, has nothing to move with but beauty, passion, and force of attitude; Sculpture therefore admits of no mediocrity; its works are either intolerable, or very fine. In Greece, the finishing of a single statue was often the work of many years.

X

Sculpture and painting take their merit from the same spirit that poetry does; a justness, a grandeur, and force of expression: and their principal objects
are

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 157

are the sublime, the beautiful, and the passionate. Painting, on account of its great latitude, approaches also very near to the variety of poetry ; in general their principles vary only according to the different materials of each.

Poetry is capable of taking a series of successive facts, which comprehend a whole action from the beginning. It puts the passions in motion gradually, and winds them up by successive efforts, that all conduce to the intended effect ; the mind could never be agitated so violently, if the storm had not come on by degrees : besides, language by its capacity of representing thoughts, of forming the communication of mind with mind, and describing emotions, takes in several great, awful, and passionate ideas that colours cannot represent ; but the painter is confined to objects of vision, and to one point or instant of time : he cannot
bring

bring into view any events which did not, or at least might not happen, at one and the same instant. The chief art of the history painter, is to hit upon a point of time, that unites the whole successive action in one view, and strikes out the emotion you are desirous of raising. Some painters have had the power of preserving the traces of a receding passion, or the mixed disturbed emotions of the mind, without impairing the principal passion. The Medea of Timomachus was a miracle of this kind; her wild love, her rage, and her maternal pity, were all poured forth to the eye, in one portrait. From this mixture of passions, which is in nature, the murderess appeared dreadfully affecting.

It is very necessary for the union of design in painting, that one principal figure appear eminently in view, and that all the rest be subordinate to it; that is, the

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 159

the passion or attention of that principal object should give a cast to the whole piece: for instance, if it be a wrestler, or a courser in the race, the whole scene should not only be active, but the attentions and passions of the rest of the figures should all be directed by that object: if it be a fisherman over the stream, the whole scene must be silent, and meditative; if ruins, a bridge, or waterfall, even the living persons must be subordinate, and the traveller should gaze or look back with wonder. This strict union and concord is rather more necessary in painting than in poetry: the reason is, painting is almost palpably a deception, and requires the utmost skill in selecting a vicinity of probable ideas, to give it the air of reality and nature. For this reason also nothing strange, wonderful, or shocking to credulity, ought to be admitted in paintings that are designed after real life.

The

The principal art of the landscape painter lies in selecting those objects of view that are beautiful or great, providing there be a propriety and a just neighbourhood preserved in the assemblage, along with a careless distribution that solicits your eye to the principal object where it rests; in giving such a glance or confused view of those that retire out of prospect, as to raise curiosity, and create in the imagination affecting ideas that do not appear; and in bestowing as much life and action as possible, without overcharging the piece. A landscape is enlivened by putting the animated figures into action; by flinging over it the cheerful aspect which the sun bestows, either by a proper disposition of shade, or by the appearances that beautify his rising or setting; and by a judicious prospect of water, which always conveys the idea of motion: a few dishevelled clouds have the same

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 161

same effect, but with somewhat less vivacity.

The excellence of portrait-painting and sculpture spring from the same principles that affect us in life; they are not the persons who perform at a comedy or tragedy we go to see with so much pleasure, but the passions and emotions they display: in like manner, the value of statues and pictures arise in proportion to the strength and clearness of the expression of the passions; and to the peculiar and distinguishing air of character. Great painters almost always chuse a fine face to exhibit the passions in. If you recollect what I said on beauty, you will easily conceive the reason why the agreeable passions are most lively in a beautiful face; beauty is the natural vehicle of the agreeable passions. For the same reason the tempestuous passions appear strongest in a fine face; it suffers the most violent derangement

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by

by them. To which we may add, upon the same principle, that dignity or courage cannot be mixed in a very ill favoured countenance ; and that the painter, after exerting his whole skill, finds in their stead pride and terror. These observations, which have been often made, serve to illustrate our thoughts on beauty. Besides the strict propriety of nature, sculpture and figure-painting is a kind of description, which, like poetry, is under the direction of genius ; that, while it preserves nature, sometimes, in a fine flight of fancy, throws an ideal splendor over the figures that never existed in real life. Such is the sublime and celestial character that breathes over the Apollo Belvedere, and the inexpressible beauties that dwell upon the Venus of Medici, and seem to shed an illumination around her. This superior beauty must be varied with propriety, as well as the passions ; the elegance of Juno must be decent, lofty, and
elated ;

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 163

elated ; of Minerva, masculine, confident, and chaste ; and of Venus, winning, soft, and conscious of pleasing. These sister arts, painting and statuary, as well as poetry, put it out of all doubt, that the imagination carries the ideas of the beautiful and the sublime far beyond visible nature ; since no mortal ever possessed the blaze of divine charms that surrounds the Apollo Belvedere, or the Venus of Medici, I have just mentioned.

A variety and flush of colouring is generally the refuge of painters, who are not able to animate their designs. We may call a lustre of colouring, the rant and sustain of painting, under which are hid the want of strength and nature. None but a painter of real genius can be severe and modest in his colouring, and please at the same time. It must be observed, that the glow and variety of colours, give a

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pleasure

pleasure of a very different kind from the object of painting. When foreign ornaments, gilding, and carving come to be considered as necessary to the beauty of pictures, they are a plain diagnostic of a decay in taste and power.

XI.

A free and easy proportion united with simplicity, seem to constitute the elegance of form in building. A subordination of parts to one evident design forms simplicity; when the members thus evidently related are great, the union is always very great. In the proportions of a noble edifice, you see the image of a creating mind result from the whole. The evident uniformity of the rotunda, and its unparalleled simplicity, are probably the sources of its superior beauty. When we look up at the vaulted roof, that seems to rest upon our horizon, we are astonished at the magnificence, more than at the visible extent.

When

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 165

When I am taking a review of the *XII*
objects of beauty and grandeur, can I
pass by unnoticed the source of colours
and visible beauty? When the light is
withdrawn, all nature retires from view,
visible bodies are annihilated, and the
soul mourns the universal absence in so-
litude; when it returns, it brings along
with it the creation, and restores joy as
well as beauty.

If I should distinguish the perceptions *XIII*
of the senses from each other, according to
the strength of the traces left on the ima-
gination, I should call those of hearing,
feeling, smelling, and tasting, *notions*,
which impress the memory but weakly;
while those of colours I should call ideas,
to denote their strength and peculiar
clearness upon the imagination. This
distinction deserves particular notice. The
Author of nature has drawn an impene-
trable veil over the fixed material world

that surrounds us: solid matter refuses our acquaintance, and will be known to us only by resisting the touch; but how obscure are the informations of feeling! light comes like an intimate acquaintance to relieve us; it introduces all nature to us, the fields, the trees, the flowers, the crystal streams, and azure sky. But all this beautiful diversity is no more than an agreeable enchantment formed by the light that spreads itself to view; the fixed parts of nature are eternally entombed beneath the light, and we see nothing in fact but a creation of colours. Schoolmen, with their usual arrogance, will tell you their ideas are transcripts of nature, and assure you that the veracity of God requires they should be so, because we cannot well avoid thinking so; but nothing is an object of vision but light, the picture we see is not annexed to the earth, but comes with angelic celerity to meet our eyes. That which is called
body

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 167

body or substance, that reflects the various colours of the light, and lies hid beneath the appearance, is wrapt in impenetrable obscurity; it is fatally shut out from our eyes and imagination, and only causes in us the ideas of feeling, tasting, or smelling, which yet are not resemblances of any part of matter. I do not know ~~do~~ if I appear too strong when I call colours the expression of the Divinity. Light strikes us with such vivacity and force, that we can hardly call it inanimate or unintelligent,

Shall we admit uniformity into our XIII/
list of beauty, or first examine its real merits? When we look into the works of nature, we cannot avoid observing that uniformity is but the beauty of minute objects. The opposite sides of a leaf divided in the middle, and the leaves of the same species of vegetables, retain a striking uniformity; but the branch, the tree, and forest desert this similarity, and take

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a noble irregularity with vast advantage. Cut a tree into a regular form, and you change its lofty port for a minute prettiness. What forms the beauty of country scenes, but the want of uniformity? No two hills, vales, rivers, or prospects, are alike; and you are charmed by the variety. Let us now suppose a country made up of the most beautiful hills and descents imaginable, but every hill and every vale alike, and at an equal distance; they soon tire you, and you find the delight vanishes with the novelty.

There are, I own, certain assemblages that form a powerful beauty by their union, of which a fine face is incontestible evidence. But the charm does not seem by any means to reside in the uniformity, which in the human countenance is not very exact. The human countenance may be planned out much more
regu-

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 169

regularly, but I fancy without adding to the beauty, for which we must seek another source. In truth, the finest eye in the world without meaning, and the finest mouth without a smile, are insipid. An agreeable countenance includes in the idea thereof an agreeable and gentle disposition. How the countenance, and an arrangement of colours and features, can express the idea of an unseen mind, we know not ; but so the fact is, and to this fine intelligent picture, whether it be false or true, certain I am, that the beauty of the human countenance is owing, more than to uniformity. Shall we then say, that the greatest uniformity, along with the greatest variety, forms beauty ? But this is a repetition of words without distinct ideas, and explicates a well-known effect, by an obscure cause. Uniformity, as far as it extends, excludes variety ; and variety, so far as it reaches, excludes uniformity. Variety is by far
more

more pleasing than uniformity, but it does not constitute beauty; for it is impossible that can be called beauty, which, when well known, ceases to please: whereas a fine piece of music shall charm after being heard a hundred times; and a lovely countenance makes a stronger impression on the mind by being often seen, because there, beauty is real. I think we may, upon the whole, conclude, that if uniformity be a beauty, it is but the beauty of minute objects; and that it pleases only by the visible design, and the evident footsteps of intelligence it discovers.

XIV. I must say something of the evanescent charms of novelty. When our curiosity is excited at the opening of new scenes, our ideas are affecting and beyond life, and we see objects in a brighter hue than they after appear in. For when curiosity is sated, the objects grow dull, and
our

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 171

our ideas fall to their diminutive natural size. What I have said may account for the raptured prospect of our youth we see backward ; novelty always recommends, because expectations of the unknown are ever high ; and in youth we have an eternal novelty : unexperienced credulous youth gilds our young ideas, and ever meets a fresh lustre that is not yet allayed by doubts. In age, experience corrects our hopes, and the imagination cools ; for this reason, wisdom and high pleasure do not reside together.

I have observed through this discourse, XV.
that the delight we receive from the visible
objects of nature, or from the fine arts,
may be divided into the conceptions of
the sublime, and conceptions of the
beautiful. Of the origin of the sublime
I spoke hypothetically, and with diffidence;
all we certainly know on this head is,
that

that the sensations of the sublime we receive from external objects, are attended with obscure ideas of power and immensity; the origin of our sensations of beauty, are still more unintelligible: however, I think there is some foundation for classing the objects of beauty under different heads, by a correspondence or similarity, that may be observed between several particulars.

XV. A full and consistent evidence of design, especially if the design be attended with an important effect, gives the idea of beauty: thus a ship under sail, a greyhound, a well-shaped horse, are beautiful, because they display with ease a great design. Birds and beasts of prey, compleatly armed for destruction, are for the same reason beautiful, although objects of terror.

Where

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 173

Where different designs at a single view, appear to concur to one effect, the beauty accumulates; as in the Grecian architecture: where different designs, leading to different effects, unite in the same whole, they cause confusion, and diminish the idea of beauty, as in the Gothic buildings. Upon the same principle, confusion and disorder are ugly or frightful; the figures made by spilled liquors are always ugly. Regular figures are handsome; and the circular, the most regular, is the most beautiful. This regulation holds only where the sublime does not enter; for in that case the irregularity and carelessness adds to the ideas of power, and raises in proportion our admiration. The confusion in which we see the stars scattered over the heavens, and the rude arrangement of mountains, add to their grandeur.

A mixture of the sublime aids exceedingly the idea of beauty, and height-

ens the horrors of disorder and ugliness. Personal beauty is vastly raised by a noble air; on the contrary, the dissolution and ruins of a large city, distresses the mind proportionally: but while we mourn over great ruins, at the destruction of our species, we are also soothed by the generous commiseration we feel in our own breasts, and therefore ruins give us the same kind of grateful melancholly we feel at a tragedy. Of all the objects of discord and confusion, no other is so shocking as the human soul in madness. When we see the principle of thought and beauty disordered, the horror is too high, like that of a massacre committed before our eyes, to suffer the mind to make any reflex act on the god-like traces of pity that distinguish our species; and we feel no sensations but those of dismay and terror.

Regular motion and life shewn in inanimate objects, give us also the secret pleasure

of seeing the same objects in a different situation.

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 175

ture we call beauty. Thus waves spent, and successively breaking upon the shore, and waving fields of corn or grass in continued motion, are ever beautiful. The beauty of colours may perhaps be arranged under this head: colours, like notes of music, affect the passions; red incites anger; black to melancholy; white brings a gentle joy to the mind; the softer colours refresh or relax it. The mixtures and gradations of colours have an effect correspondent to the transitions and combinations of sounds; but the strokes are too transient and feeble to become the objects of expression.

Beauty also results from every disposition of nature that plainly discovers her favour and indulgence to us. Thus the spring season, when the weather becomes mild, the verdant fields, trees loaded with fruit or covered with shade, clear springs, but particularly the human face, where the
gentle

gentle passions are delineated, is beyond expression beautiful. On the same principle, inclement wintry skies, trees stripped of their verdure, desert barren lands, and above all death, is frightful and shocking. I must, however, observe, that I do not by any means suppose, that the sentiment of beauty arises from a reflex considerate act of the mind, upon the observation of the designs of nature or of art; the sentiment of beauty is instantaneous, and depends on no prior reflections. All I mean is, that design and beauty are in an arbitrary manner united together; so that where we see the one, whether we reflect on it or no, we perceive the other. I must further add, that there may be other divisions of beauty easily discoverable, which I have not taken notice of.

The general sense of beauty, as well as of grandeur, seems peculiar to man in the

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 177

the creation. The herd in common with him enjoy the gentle breath of spring; they lye down to repose on the flowery bank, and hear the peaceful humming of the bee; they enjoy the green fields and pastures: but we have reason to think, that it is man only who sees the image of beauty over the happy prospect, and rejoices at it; that it is hid from the brute creation, and depends not upon sense, but on the intelligent mind.

We have just taken a transient view of the principal departments of taste; let us now, madam, make a few general reflections upon our subject.

The human genius, with the best assistance, and the finest examples, breaks forth but slowly; and the greatest men have but gradually acquired a just taste, and chaste simple conceptions of beauty. At an immature age, the sense of beauty

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is weak and confused, and requires an excess of colouring to catch its attention. It then prefers extravagance and rant to justness, a gross false wit to the engaging light of nature, and the shewy, rich, and glaring, to the fine and amiable. This is the childhood of taste; but as the human genius strengthens and grows to maturity, if it be assisted by a happy education, the sense of universal beauty awakes; it begins to be disgusted with the false and misshapen deceptions that pleased before, and rests with delight on elegant simplicity, on pictures of easy beauty, and unaffected grandeur.

The progress of the fine arts in the human mind, may be fixed at three remarkable degrees, from their foundation to the loftiest height. The basis is a sense of beauty and of the sublime, the second step we may call taste, and the last genius.

A sense

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 179

A sense of the beautiful and of the great is universal, which appears from the uniformity thereof in the most distant ages and nations. What was engaging and sublime in antient Greece and Rome, are so at this day: and, as I observed before, there is not the least necessity of improvement or science, to discover the charms of a graceful or noble deportment. Here is a fine, but an ineffectual light in the breast of man. After nightfall we have admired the planet Venus, the beauty and vivacity of her lustre, the immense distance from which we judged her beams issued, and the silence of the night, all concurred to strike us with an agreeable amazement. But she shone in distinguished beauty, without giving sufficient light to direct our steps, or shew us the objects around us. Thus in unimproved nature, the light of the mind is bright and useless. In utter barbarity, our prospect of it is still less fixed; it ap-
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pears,

pears, and then again seems wholly to vanish in the savage breast; like the same planet Venus, when she has but just raised her orient beams to mariners above the waves, and is now descried, and now lost, through the swelling billows.

The next step is taste, the subject of our enquiry, which consists in a distinct, unconfused knowledge of the great and beautiful. Although you see not many possessed of a good taste, yet the generality of mankind are capable of it. The very populace of Athens had acquired a good taste by habit and fine examples, so that a delicacy of judgment seemed natural to all who breathed the air of that elegant city: we find a manly and elevated sense distinguish the common people of Rome and of all the cities of Greece, while the level of mankind was preserved in those cities; while the Plebeians had a share in the government, and an utter separation was

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 181

was not made between them and the nobles, by wealth and luxury. But when once the common people are rent afunder wholly from the great and opulent, and made subservient to the luxury of the latter; then the taste of nature infallibly takes her flight from both parties. The poor by a sordid habit, and an attention wholly confined to mean views, and the rich by an attention to the changeable modes of fancy, and a vitiated preference for the rich and costly, lose view of simple beauty and grandeur. It may seem a paradox, and yet I am firmly persuaded, that it would be easier at this day to give a good taste to the young savages of America, than to the noble youth of Europe.

Genius, the pride of man, as man is of the creation, has been possessed but by few, even in the brightest ages. Men of superior genius, while they see the

rest of mankind painfully struggling to comprehend obvious truths, glance themselves through the most remote consequences, like lightning through a path that cannot be traced. They see the beauties of nature with life and warmth, and paint them forcibly without effort, as the morning sun does the scenes he rises upon; and in several instances, communicate to objects a morning freshness and unaccountable lustre, that is not seen in the creation of nature. The poet, the statuary, the painter, have produced images that left nature far behind.

The constellations of extraordinary personages who appeared in Greece and Rome, at or near the same period of time, after ages of darkness to which we know no beginning; and the long barrenness of those countries after in great men, prove that genius owes much of its lustre to a personal contest of glory,
and

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 183

and the strong rivalship of great examples within actual view and knowledge; and that great parts alone are not able to lift a person out of barbarity. It is further to be observed, that when the inspiring spirit of the fine arts retired, and left inanimate and cold the breasts of poets, painters, and statuaries, men of taste still remained, who distinguished and admired the beauteous monuments of genius; but the power of execution was lost; and although monarchs loved and courted the arts, yet they refused to return. From whence it is evident, that neither taste, nor natural parts, form the creating genius that inspired the great masters of antiquity, and that they owed their extraordinary powers to something different from both.

If we consider the numbers of men who wrote well, and excelled in every department of the liberal arts, in the ages of genius, and the simplicity that always

attends beauty; we must be led to think, that although few perhaps can reach to the supreme beauty of imagination displayed by the first-rate poets, orators, and philosophers; yet most men are capable of just thinking and agreeable writing. Nature lies very near our reflections, and will appear, if we be not misled and prejudiced before the sense of beauty grows to maturity. The populace of Athens and Rome prove strongly, that uncommon parts or great learning are not necessary to make men think justly.

XVII. We know not the bounds of taste, because we are unacquainted with the extent and boundaries of the human genius. The mind in ignorance is like a sleeping giant; it has immense capacities, without the power of using them. By listening to the lessons of Socrates, men grew heroes, philosophers, and legislators; for he, of all mankind, seemed to have discovered the

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 185

the short and lightsome path to the faculties of the mind. To give you an instance of the human capacity, that comes more immediately within your notice, what graces, what sentiments have been transplanted into the motion of a minuet, which a savage has no conception of ! We know not to what degree of rapture harmony is capable of being carried, nor what hidden powers may be in yet unexperienced beauties of the imagination, whose objects are in scenes and in worlds we are strangers to. Children who die young, have no conception of the sentiment of personal beauty. Are we certain that we are not yet children in respect to several species of beauties ? We are ignorant whether there be not passions in the soul, that have hitherto remained unawaked and undiscovered for want of objects to rouse them : we feel plainly, that some such are gently agitated and moved by certain notes of music. In reality,

reality, we know not but the taste and capacity of beauty and grandeur in the soul, may extend as far beyond all we actually perceive, as this whole world exceeds the sphere of a cockle or an oyster.

XVIII. Let us now consider by what means taste is usually depraved and lost in a nation, that is neither conquered by barbarians nor has lost the improvements in agriculture, husbandry, and defence, that allow men leisure for reflection and embellishment. I observed before, that this natural light is not so clear in the greatest men, but it may lie oppressed by barbarity. When people of mean parts, and of pride without genius, get into elevated stations, they want a taste for simple grandeur, and mistake for it what is uncommonly glaring and extraordinary; whence proceeds false wit of every kind, a gaudy richness in dress, an oppressive load of ornament in building, and a
grandeur

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 187

grandeur overstrained and puerile universally. I must observe, that people of bad taste and little genius almost always lay a great stress on trivial matters, and are ostentatious and exact in singularities, or in a decorum in trifles. When people of mean parts appear in high stations, and at the head of the fashionable world, they cannot fail to introduce a false embroidered habit of mind ; people of nearly the same genius who make up the croud, will admire and follow them ; and at length solitary taste, adorned only by noble simplicity, will be lost in the general example,

Also when a nation is much corrupted ; when avarice and a love of gain have seized upon the hearts of men ; when the nobles ignominiously bend their necks to corruption and bribery, or enter into the base mysteries of gaming ; then decency, elevated principles, and greatness of soul expire ;

expire; and all that remains is a comedy or puppet-show of elegance, in which the dancing-master and peer are upon a level, and the mind is understood to have no part in the drama of politeness, or else to act under a mean disguise of virtues which it is not possessed of.

- XIX. Upon putting together the whole of our reflections, you see two different natures laying claim to the human race, and dragging it different ways. You see a necessity that arises from our situation and circumstances, bending us down into unworthy misery and sordid baseness; and you see, when we can escape from the insulting tyranny of our fate, and acquire ease and freedom, a generous nature that lay stupified and oppressed, begin to awake and charm us with prospects of beauty and glory. This awaking genius gazes in rapture at the beauteous and elevating scenes of nature. The beauties of nature are familiar, and charm it like a mother's

mother's bosom; and the objects which have the plain marks of immense power and grandeur, raise in it a still, an inquisitive, and trembling delight: but genius often throws over the objects of its conceptions colours finer than those of nature, and opens a Paradise that exists nowhere but in its own creations. The bright and peaceful scenes of Arcadia, and the lovely descriptions of pastoral poetry, never existed on earth, no more than Pope's shepherds or the river gods of Windsor forest: it is all but a charming illusion, which the mind first paints with celestial colours, and then languishes for. Knight-errantry is another kind of delusion, which though it be fictitious in fact, yet is true in sentiment. I believe there are few people who in their youth, before they be corrupted by the commerce of the world, are not knight-errants and princesses in their hearts. The soul, in a beautiful ecstasy, com-

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municates a flame to words which they had not ; and poetry, by its quick transitions, bold figures, lively images, and the variety of efforts to paint the latent rapture, bears witness, that the confused ideas of the mind are still infinitely superior, and beyond the reach of all description. It is this divine spirit that, when roused from its lethargy, breathes in noble sentiments, that charms in elegance, that stamps upon marble or canvas the figures of gods and heroes, that inspires them with an air above humanity, and leads the soul through the enchanting meanders of music in a waking vision, through which it cannot break to discover the near objects that charm it.

How shall we venture to trace the object of this surprising beauty peculiar to genius, which evidently does not come to the mind from the senses : it is not conveyed in sound, for we feel the sounds
of

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 191

of music charm us by gently agitating and swelling the passions, and setting some passions afloat, for which we have no name, and knew not until they were awaked in the mind by harmony. This beauty does not arrive at the mind by the ideas of vision, though it be moved by them ; for it evidently bestows on the mimic representations and images the mind makes of the objects of sense, an enchanting loveliness that never existed in those objects. Where shall the soul find this amazing beauty, whose very shadow, glimmering upon the imagination, opens unspeakable raptures in it, and distracts it with languishing pleasure ? What are those stranger sentiments that lie in wait in the soul, until music calls them forth ? What is the obscure but unavoidable value or merit of virtue ? or who is the law-maker in the mind who gives it a worth and dignity beyond all estimation, and punishes the breach of it

it with conscious terror and despair? What is it in objects of immeasurable power and grandeur, that we look for with still amazement and awful delight? But I find, madam, we have been insensibly led into subjects too abstruse and severe; I must not put the graces with whom we have been conversing to flight, and draw the serious air of meditation over that countenance where the smiles naturally dwell.

I have, in consequence of your permission, put together such thoughts as occurred to me on good taste. I told, you if I had leisure hereafter, I would dispose of them with more regularity, and add any new observation that I may make. Before I finish, I must in justice make my acknowledgements of the assistance I received. I took notice, at the beginning, that Rollin's Observations on Taste gave occasion to this discourse. Sir Harry Beaumont's
I polished

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 193

polished dialogue on beauty, called Crito, was of service to me; and I have availed myself of the writings and sentiments of the ancients, particularly of the poets and statuaries of Greece, which was the native and original country of the graces and fine arts. But I should be very unjust, if I did not make my chief acknowledgments where they are more peculiarly due. If your modesty will not suffer me to draw that picture from which I borrowed my ideas of elegance, I am bound, at least in honesty, to disclaim every merit but that of copying from a bright original.

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A DISCOURSE on TASTE.

Continued in a DIALOGUE between a young Lady and the Dean of ———.

XX

Amelia. I AM pleased with the familiarity of your friend's Clie, and I am pleased at the subject. I always took learning to be harsh and unseeable, but nothing can be more agreeable than the fine arts. Dear music! painting! statuary! architecture! elegance! I am in love with them all. Why is our taste for them so different from our taste for the other parts of learning?

Dean. Modern philosophers, madam, leave the human mind to the poets, as a thing of too much levity to deserve attention, and pay their chief regards to sober solid matter, or the substance of which

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 195

which bodies are formed. They will teach you its laws, and how to compute, with scrupulous exactness, the forces of bodies in motion. They nicely weigh the arguments *pro* and *con* about the divisibility of matter, and then leave them in the balances. They measure and compare figures, which is of vast use in the concerns of life: but they have greater effects in view; no less than the construction of worlds, and the furnishing them afterwards. They ingeniously attribute several powers to the form, to the motion, and size of the invisible particles of bodies, which were never known to reside in visible form, motion, or size. For instance, they tell you that the same substance or matter, being in the form of minute spheres or globes, constitutes water; but being exhibited in the form of squares, pyramids, and other figures, of proper sizes, it makes trees, rocks, animals, and the other furniture of this

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world.

world. Having taken a licence of bestowing a metamorphosing or productive power on unknown forms and sizes, where they are confident they cannot be detected, they fit you out a world with its cargo, with as little difficulty as they would a ship for the East Indies; and are ready to furnish you out as many more as there is occasion for, throughout the expanse of the heavens. It is even a case of doubt, whether matter may not think. But as the gravest philosophers have modestly acknowledged, that thought must in that case be impressed by the arbitrary volition of the deity on matter, we shall never be able to determine, whether in a world constituted somewhat differently from this, the trees are not animated, and the flowers are not little gay coquets.

A. I should like much to be acquainted with your little gaudy coquets, if they were not subject to die so soon on my

DISCOURSE ON TASTE: 197

my hands. As for the rest of what you have been saying, I understand little of it. Your philosophers have already tired me ; let us leave them at work in their matter, I would not for the world disturb them, for I see they are busy about affairs of great consequence. What I want to know is, why the fine arts are so familiar and pleasing.

D. You see that the kind of learning I have been speaking of, bears little relation to man : therefore providentially it has few natural charms for him. The truth is, the world is a scene thro' which his fate obliges him to hasten ; its matter and creation are of little consequence to him, otherwise than affording him a passage between birth and death ; in a few years they will be of no manner of concern to him. In proportion to this worthlessness, provident nature has wrapped them in obscurity. When he employs

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employs his thoughts about matter, it retires from him sullenly into darkness, and his philosophy becomes trifling, cold, and barren : but when you look towards the fine arts, you see that they all bear a manifest relation to the soul or spirit, that forms *ourselves* throughout our whole existence. History, tragedy, comedy, and every species of poetry, are either representations of the human passions, or of the ideas that move them. Painting, sculpture, the various beauties of vision, music, and that noble part of philosophy, which treats of human nature, all take their value from their relation to the soul.

A. If I understand you right, you are of opinion, that it is some prospect exhibited of the mind itself, or of the passions, that make history, tragedy, comedy, and the other species of poetry delightful ; and that the studies that have not
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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 199

the mind immediately in view, are cold and tasteless.

D. You conceive my meaning very exactly. Euclid and Sir Isaac Newton were men of prodigious knowledge and invention ; every lover of science studies them carefully, and is obliged to admire the clearness and extent of genius they displayed ; but their works are cold and inanimate ; to read them requires patience, and to comprehend them uncommon labour, and painful perseverance. they convince our reason, but touch not the heart. If you like to feast on the ideas that naturally charm us, look at the simple conceptions of the human mind in Shakespeare, or the sublime of Milton. It is in vain to plead in behalf of Euclid and Sir Isaac Newton, that improvements beyond measure useful in the concerns of life, depend on their discoveries. Taste is not convinced by argument, nor bribed

by use or conveniency. It passes by the inventors of useful arts with negligence, and admires with a lover's warmth the poet, the statuary, and painter, and their idle arts. Let me add, that the scholars of Socrates, (who much confined their enquiries to the human mind) seemed to have acquired powers superior to the rest of mankind, and to display a pomp of genius that never appeared before or since; which is a strong testimony of the richness of this vein of science, and of the kindness of the author of our prepossessions, who has invited us by pleasure and advantage to turn our thoughts to the intellectual part of man.

A. I am glad Socrates, whom you admire so much, was of my taste; and I shall have a great esteem for him from henceforward. You have given me a new light into the connection observable between the fine arts. They are all united
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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 201

by the human mind, to which they are mutually related. - But how came it to pass that the fine arts lay dead so long in barbarity?

D. My friend told you in Clio—when **XXI** the life of man was shortened, and his wants encreased by the barrenness of the earth; when half his life was cast into helpless, youth, or declining age; and cold, hunger, and wild beasts persecuted him, he was inevitably obliged to turn all his attention to his necessities, and to neglect all thoughts of arts and elegance, consequently to fall into barbarism.

A. That I comprehend very clearly; but after the human state was improved, and men had leisure to think, when the arts came to be known, admired, and cultivated, how came their reign to be so short? What was the reason that they forsook nations that loved them, and were
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captivated with their charms; and that although courted, they obstinately refused to return?

D. There is something equally unaccountable in their first visit to the world. In Greece, and Greece only, the fine arts sprung up, unlooked for, and unknown, to a state of perfection, and to a state of perfection beyond all emulation. Tragedy, comedy, history, philosophy, sculpture, painting, and music, like the Graces, appeared hand in hand. And in the Grecian writers, you frequently discover manifest traces of the grand genius that inspired them. But the wonder of their appearance was not greater, than that of their recess. The great men in those arts in Greece, lay within so narrow a compass, that they might nearly be acquainted with each other. But when that noble age passed by, the arts began to languish, and never

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 203

after recovered their lustre. Exactly the same revolution happened in Rome : the genius of taste seemed to visit the world once more, and to take her residence in the capital of the world. She staid about eighty years : she waited upon the obsequies of the commonwealth ; but after, she could not be detained by any human means or power, although the emperors of the world were many of them the professed patrons of the sciences. In this last age there is a light reflected from the two bright æras I have mentioned, which now shines upon the western world. I call it a reflected light, because the powers of the soul do not revive in concert as formerly, and display an uniform force of genius, but the fine arts appear amongst us exactly in proportion to the standards we have left from the antients. Music being totally lost, we have but faint, disunited, and accidental traces of the mighty powers of it.

it. Painting, elegance, and oratory, are in a state of mediocrity, if not below it. But poetry, which is so strong and susceptible in the human breast, and sculpture, in both of which we have so many fine models from the antients, are arrived at a higher degree of perfection; although in both, we see the antients at a vast distance before us, and come near to perfection only in proportion as we imitate well, and catch somewhat of their original spirit.

A. I thought we excelled all ages in every branch of knowledge, and in all arts. I am impatient to know the reason of our inferiority. I want to know several things together for fear I should forget them. What was the reason of the rise of the fine arts in Greece and Rome? and why did they go away so abruptly without any respect or complaisance for kings and emperors?

D. So

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 205

D. So many great men have failed in the discoveries you require, that all a person who attempts them can reasonably hope for, is to guess well. The method I shall pursue, in order to satisfy you, is to take a close view of the circumstances in which the sublime arts were produced; and from them to deduce the effects with as much probability as they will bear: your knowledge of Greek and Roman history will make what I have to say easy to you. You may observe, that the fine arts appeared in perfection only in free states; and that when freedom fell, the arts also languished and expired with it, in spite of all endeavours to the contrary, and left nothing behind, but a cold imitation of the original creating genius that inspired artists. Yet it is necessary to observe, that if the birth of arts depended on liberty alone, they would grow up pretty similarly in all democracies. The event shews, that there are
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other requisites necessary, which concurred in Greece, but no where else, in the same auspicious degree.

The fine arts only arrived to perfection in free countries, because liberty is the very soul, and inspiring idea of the arts. Let us unfold this truth gradually, that we may conceive it well. I observed before, that those arts depend on the mind of man for their value ; and I also hinted often, that there is a certain sublimity of genius common to them all. Here then are two known points of union. Freedom bestows on man an uncommon elevation and dignity of soul, whose symptoms are very striking. The members of free states have always looked upon themselves as a species of men far above the subjects of monarchies. This haughty idea is inculcated by habit ; it is sucked in with their milk ; it is the burden of the wondrous tales told to their listening

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 207

listening youth ; it is nursed by example and precept, until it becomes an enthusiasm that possesses the whole imagination. Those who are acquainted with the Roman and Grecian orators, know that they spoke in defence of liberty with a sacred transport and warmth that approached to rapture ; and their patriots, inspired by the same spirit, performed actions that astonished nations, and seemed above human power. This sublime idea, that flamed and lightened in the oration, and gave supernatural force to the patriot, was undoubtedly the same that beamed so brightly on the imagination of the statuary and painter, and struck the lyre with such divine rage : but when liberty fell, this glorious dignity of soul was no more, and the arts fell to a servile imitation, when the celestial idea that gave them power expired. But however haughty the members of democracies may be, this divine spirit being
equally

equally oppressed in all men, by the avocation of their state, and their necessities, it will remain listless and inanimated even in a free state, until several fortunate circumstances concur to warm it into life and operation.

A. Dear sir, let us come to Greece as fast as we can, and see the circumstances that concurred there so happily to produce the fine arts.

D. I told you, madam, I speak only in doubt; but no appearance of truth ought to be neglected in this curious enquiry. We are looking back to an age, when agriculture and the other arts of plenty and ease were lately introduced into Greece: the acquisition of the necessities of life allowed time of reflection; and luxury, which even then was at a great height in Asia, had not yet found the way into Europe. In this state the
simple

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 269

simple and natural always lie near men's thoughts.

The Greeks had received the first hints in painting and statuary from Egypt; but these arts served in Egypt only to mark down important notes, and public regulations, by hieroglyphics, or visible pictures, before the use of letters was discovered; and they were considered as inventions of public utility, but not of genius. What were symbols in Egypt, were looked upon in Greece as the figures of gods; and this mistake produced new ideas in painters and statuaries, that must prove favourable to their arts: they now thought it necessary to distinguish their works by their beauty and grandeur. At the same time music and poetry lay in a savage state, but in their savage state they were admired and cultivated.

Greece at this early age was divided into a great number of petty states, of

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different

different origins, principles, customs, and governments, that agreed in nothing but the common sentiments of nature, and fortunately in one language. It happened that they instituted frequent public assemblies, where the men of genius, the idle, and opulent, who had leisure for reflexion, and the most illustrious in their respective states, met regularly, amongst other decisions, to judge of works of taste, which at first undoubtedly were rude and coarse. Beside the appointed judges, curiosity collected a vast number of others, whom you may call the voluntary disciples of taste. In these noble assemblies their prejudices were confined to each community and town; and they had no common prejudice, but in favour of what was really beautiful. The universal judgment was therefore always right, and could be no other than the common universal taste of nature: for you are never to forget, that although

to which we are to add, that taste

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 211

taste be overwhelmed by prejudice, it is not lost. The Goths had their poetry and architecture, in which the divine genius appeared bewildered, but still that appearance charmed them. It is also necessary to conceive, that although all mankind lay under prejudices, their prejudices, like the testimony of false witnesses, differed, while all agree in the sentiments of nature. Under the auspicious æconomy I spoke of, and judges so happily calculated, in Greece genius stripped off fast, though gradually, its beggar's weeds, and shone forth in its native splendor. False ornament and prejudice were detected, true beauty of every kind sprung forth like original light, it was discovered with vast exultation, and spread without pains like the national language. Their very populace thought and spoke nobly. The Romans, about the time of the ruin of the commonwealth, were in a situation not very unlike this I have been

speaking of: they were formed of all the known nations of the earth, and yet they all spoke one language. A variety in the original prepossessions, along with an universal communication, is the best circumstance for wearing away prejudices, and for arriving at just conceptions of nature and beauty. Besides, the Romans with vast emulation, made the acquisitions of Greece their own, and caught the spirit they admired. But it must be confessed, that the Roman taste had much of imitation, and inherited only a remnant of the creating genius of Greece. Amongst the happy circumstances peculiar to the native country of the muses and the graces, I should have observed, that an excellency in the arts always procured distinction and honour in the state, which in free governments, where numbers enjoy a share of the sovereign power, is a warmer incentive to emulation, than a monarch has to bestow.

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 213

Artists in Greece reflected honour on the states they belonged to, and were almost idolized by those states.

In such a noble contest of genius, in which every step was calculated to unveil the sublime beauties of the mind, men immediately came to imitate nature. The pictures and images expressed and moved, the passions of music were discovered, and oratory armed itself with the mighty powers of the soul. After the beautiful and affecting, appeared the sublime: the human spirit was surprised to hear the divine voice of poetry raised so high; it was surprised to see its unutterable sentiments fixed upon marble, and a grandeur disclosed in the different provinces of genius by far superior to the originals in nature. But it would be absolutely impossible for the mind to take this lofty flight in the imitative arts, if their ideas of the human spirit, which is the object

of those arts, was not vast and enthusiastic. The arts in supreme beauty are the inspiration of a soul surrounded with grandeur, breathing virtue and liberty, whose tone of voice is celestial, and whose attitudes express a divine habit of mind. While this spirit existed in Greece and Rome, their patriots were demi gods; the poet's idea produced tragic and epic heroes, who emulated their deities. The painter and sculptor ventured to bring gods to view in the human form, expressive of the divine character; and music was composed, that called up the passions with sovereign authority, and led the soul captive by a regulated order of sounds. It is a loss to me, that you are not acquainted with Demosthenes: the inspiring spirit that raised him and the other ancient orators to so high a degree of importance, is immediately discovered to consist in this dignity and immense value put upon human virtue and freedom. As
soon

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 215

soon as the liberties of Greece and Rome were destroyed ; when the value of human nature sunk, and despotic governments brought guilt and servitude together into view, then the divine enthusiasm and boldness that attended on liberty expired ; and the arts, whose real object was the haughty and sublime spirit of man, fell together irretrievably. After which, genius could only imitate the works of the antients, and produce a cold beauty, destitute of the original sacred energy.

A. I have heard you with great attention ; every thing you have said gives me cause to grieve for the loss of the liberties of almost the whole world. What beauty ! what grandeur ! what invention did they bring to mankind ? O ye tyrants of the earth, how have ye defaced human nature ! What a happiness is it to be born in a country of liberty !

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D. You

XXII.

D. You have got a view of the fair side of human nature. If there were not some mighty inconveniencies that attended liberty, such is the fondness of the world for it, that any man who durst assume the sovereignty over his fellow-creatures, would be torn in pieces by his own relations and domestics ; and every person on earth would prove a Brutus to him. The truth is, if the dignity and virtue assumed by the republican were real, the whole race of man would be free, and there would be little occasion for government : but natural dignity and virtue are only fine spectres, that haunt and delight the soul, like the poet's visions. For, in fact, man's state, his circumstances, and vices, make subjection necessary to him, and oblige him to bear a yoke he hates. If indeed he were pressed by no appetites, and invaded by no evils, or had always at hand a supply of enjoyments, he would be a very innocent creature, he would form no designs to disturb
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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 217

his neighbour's repose, and would require but few laws to restrain him: he would have no temptation to violate his intellectual taste of virtue and dignity; and the golden age, which in idea looks so delightful, would appear in reality on the earth. But while man is a prey to evils, and to appetites, which may be allayed at his neighbour's cost, his natural inclinations, to which he is impelled by his wretchedness, is to trespass upon those who are possessed of what he wants; and if he be not able to procure them by force, he does not cease to covet them, and attempt to acquire them by fraud. This is the secondary natural state of man, that arises from his external circumstances and wants, which make a state of subjection and society necessary, to restrain him from perpetual warfare and rapine, in all communities where some men are rich and others poor; for it is necessary to observe, that amongst savages, where there is no permanent possession.

possession, and little to be coveted, there the fetters of government are unnecessary.

A. I did not speak against subjection, but against tyranny and slavery. I suppose it is not the liberty of wild beasts that republicans seek for, but a moderate government; and that they only avoid tyranny. The Roman and Grecian commonwealths, who carried the dignity of human nature so high, were real societies, and governed by laws; so that there is no necessity to be unrestrained, in order to be free.

D. The condition of mankind in an improved and opulent state, requires restraint; and by laws of necessity as strong as fate, they cannot live a day in safety without it; their fears and danger therefore, notwithstanding their darling love of freedom, extort obedience from them; and at the moment they have attained that full liberty that leaves no more to desire,

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 219

desire, make the most insulting degree of tyranny necessary to save them from civil war and mutual carnage. What I was speaking of, was the contention between subjection and that liberty which is the beloved object of the sons of freedom; and to conceive what this really is, let us take in the whole series of conduct of past republicks, in vindication of liberty; and we shall find that no people ever broke from monarchy, or the government of a few, and adopted the popular form, stopped at any step short of anarchy; but regularly, and with a precipitate inclination, proceeded to demolish, step by step, every prerogative of the ruling powers, until they came to that level, which it is impossible to enjoy in an opulent state. If the Romans, the Carthaginians, the Athenians, and every other popular state that ever existed, proceeded alike, directly and regularly, to untie every band of government, until they fell into disorder and anarchy, and
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made a tyranny necessary, to save them from the miseries of endless civil war; it cannot be doubted, but the real object of their desires is that liberty, of which human nature is always enamoured, and ever incapable of possessing. Men are very often hurried on, by the violence of their passions, without seeing their ends, or suffering themselves to take a view of the landing-place, to which they tend; and reason, that eternal volunteer in the service of the passions, only serves to find pretences and excuses, to justify the inclinations. The parliament who attacked king Charles I. never suspected that they were rushing into anarchy: they felt the grievance of government; by little and little they eased themselves of their burden; they grasped at power; every advance they made towards freedom only made the remainder of subjection intolerable to them: but the

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 221

the minute they acquired the full possession of liberty, the tyranny of Cromwell became necessary, to save them from cutting each others throats.

Montesquieu observes, that factions, and contention are essential to free states. He saw plainly the fact, but was not quite so well apprized of the cause; for nothing can be a clearer evidence, that the freedom men desire, cannot be reconciled with any permanency to the human state, than that in all societies who adopt the principles of liberty, there is a perpetual ferment and strife, until those principles be ejected out of the constitution. The ostracism of the Athenians, and the proscriptions of the Romans, demonstrate the natural infirmity of their governments, and the want of a sufficient ruling power. Popular states are generally past remedy, before the decay be suspected; as their final
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end approaches, factions bring on a continual fever, that tends to destroy a frame that cannot be preserved ; and then another form of government, which is always despotic, succeeds. Nothing is more obvious, than that the government of Rome was vitally destroyed some years before Cæsar won the decisive battle of Pharsalia. It was not his ambition ruined the commonwealth, but the fall of the commonwealth, which that vigilant politician saw inevitable, incited his ambition. The prerogatives of the ruling powers were in his time utterly exhausted, yet were the Romans at no other age so universally mad for liberty ; by the encouragement of which spirit, that great statesman brought the republic to its final ruin. There is a truth necessary to be taken notice of, which Addison in his Cato has concealed with great care : it is, that Cato was the tory and cavalier
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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 223

of his time, who stood up for prerogative; and that Cæsar, while he was planing the destruction of the republic, was the whig and patron of liberty, who took every opportunity to extend the privileges of the people, in order to heighten the disorder, that was then too far gone. Pompey, who was before Cæsar the patron of the people, took exactly the same method, for the same reason; and from the event, we may infer, that there are no limits to the desire of freedom short of the destruction of government; and that there is no stage of government, in which men are more impatient for new degrees of liberty, than when the commonwealth is upon the point of dissolution, for want of sufficient authority.

A. This is really inhuman, to give me such a fine idea of liberty, and then to dash it to the ground. But since the liberty men really seek and desire is not
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attainable, how comes it to pass that the world has such an eager passion for it?

D. Please to recollect what I told you a while ago, that subjection is the necessary issue of vice; and that true virtue and dignity require no obedience to laws. Liberty is the natural endowment of innocence, consequently a right to liberty infers virtue and dignity, which the republican always lays open claim to: whilst, on the other hand, subjection is the clearest evidence of a vicious nature, and openly impeaches the worth and dignity of man. Here you may easily conceive, why an elevated deportment, and also the tranquil and softened appearance of an easy mind, become parts of the elegance we admire. They are the pictures or symbols of internal virtue and innocence, which are the real ornaments of man.

Now

To conceive a just idea of the passion of liberty, it is necessary to make an estimate of the powers of human pride and conscience, which form that passion. No one is able to bear a reproachful idea of himself, except those few Christians who are resolved in earnest to attack their own vices, and to make the sacrifice required by the gospel. We see the rest of the world making it the chief art of life, and employing the most refined management, to produce to view an amiable picture of themselves. Various treatises have been written by divines and philosophers, on the manifold and impervious operations of pride; and yet no one ever perhaps had an idea of the extent of genius, and variety of artifice, by which pride conceals the corruption of our hearts. The fanatic indeed, in general terms, acknowledges the depravity and wretchedness of his nature; but even this vague acknowledgement is seldom made, until he has

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persuaded

persuaded himself that he is actually purified by the particular favour of Providence. Pride is not thus employed in order to conceal us from others only ; its principal address is to hide us from ourselves, and to save us from the insufferable feelings of our own depravity, misery, and meanness. I join misery and meanness to depravity, because we have a tacit sense of their association : we are ashamed of a vile and wretched state as if it were our own fault ; our blushes for poverty shew that in sentiment we acquit Providence of the evils of life, and place them at our own doors, although reason be unable to trace our misery from our crimes : we also conceive a relation between merit and happiness ; for which reason people generally affect the appearance of happiness. In consequence of the attempt men make to impose on themselves, it is that we are generally strangers to the elaborate operations and artifices of our own pride, even when it is most busily employed

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 227

ployed ; for, the same reasons that make us deceitful in this matter make us also desirous of remaining strangers to the deceit ; we are not willing to know, that we are hiding the corruption, whose existence we would fain make a secret to ourselves.

Now, in liberty, man asserts the innocence and dignity he adores ; he revolts against restraint and ignominy ; he lays claim to an upright nature, and disclaims with infinite hatred the misery and vice that make a despotic government necessary to chain him down. The real grandeur and worth inferred by liberty, to man immersed in the vice he loves, impatient of shame, and liable to the outrage of conscience, is like the suspension of Prometheus's vulture. It lifts him out of meanness and dejection ; it soothes him with a prospect of native excellence ; it drives servile fear at a distance ; it enlarges and ennobles his soul ;

it inspires him with language and attitudes that astonish and ravish, and with sublime and celestial ideas that bear him far above the human state. What a pity it is that such beauteous visions have no reality but in the imagination; that the subjection we fly is as necessary, as our vice and misery are real; and that the virtue and dignity assumed by the haughty republican, is false and spurious, supported by mean hypocrisy, and a pride that deceives and lies!

A. Enough, enough; do not triumph in my affliction; I am an English woman, and love liberty; why do you trample with such insult on what is so dear to me?

D. Do not mistake me, madam, I love liberty with an enthusiastic passion, but I am well assured it cannot be enjoyed in opulent improved states; I also admire the noble

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 226

noble idea of human nature ; but I know it is deceitful and false, and that man is by nature a vicious and miserable being, doomed to subjection, sufferings, and ignominy. Let us follow the patriot hero, who has rescued his country from slavery, surrounded with immortal glory, and covered with laurels ever-green, the emblems of eternity ; and look upon him in the bed of sickness, oppressed with vile old age, or aghast and panting under the stroke of death the conqueror, and ask ourselves is this the end of glory ? But be not cast down, madam ; life is short and fleeting, and it is fated to insult and distress by a hand we cannot resist : and indeed seeing that eternity lies before us, it is very happy for us, that it is not in the present world this fine appetite is to be satisfied. The connection between the fine arts and freedom, brought on the reflections I made on the nature of government, which were necessary to lead you to the fol-

lowing important truth, that the glorious idea that inspires all the arts, was not calculated for the present scene : the enthusiasm of genius bears very legibly the character of a state infinitely superior to this ; where the poet, the orator, the sculptor and painter's ideas, that rise so far above nature, will meet equal objects.

A. You have given me some consolation in hope : farewell, sweet undisturbed liberty, till we meet in heaven. I am glad the enthusiasm that inspires the arts ends there ; and that we have a revelation, even in our own bosoms, that we are born for a country of rapture. We may expect from the lofty views of Christianity, and its warmer zeal, much nobler flights of fancy than the heathens were capable of.

xxiii.

D. I expected your religious sentiments would lead you to the reflection you make ; but to give you a perfect
idea

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 231

idea of the origin and spirit of the fine arts, I am obliged to inform you, that we must not hope they should ever revive in their primitive lustre amongst us. Don't be startled, madam, the Goths and Vandals are not broke loose; it is Christianity itself that is unfavourable to some of the elegant arts, and will not suffer them to flourish.

A. This is indeed a stroke I did not expect. How is it possible that the religion, whose spirit is eternal beauty and virtue, should prove destructive to taste; a religion that promises such noble fates to the human soul? I have a curiosity, and yet I am afraid to hear you.

D. The little digression I just made on the nature of the passion of liberty, was a necessary introduction to some reflections I am going to make on the influence of Christianity on the

fine arts. I must pray you to observe carefully, that the Christian religion takes the fall of man, and its corrupt state for its foundation, and strictly requires of us a deep sense of our natural wretchedness and depravity. It is beyond the power of thought to form so striking a picture of human corruption as what is exhibited to us by the death of the Son of God. We may reflect upon it as long as we please, but the warmest imagination will never be able to reach, or comprehend, the boundless iniquity, that this immane sacrifice suggests. The fixed design and tender of revelation is to imbue us with a sense of our misery and vice, to render us lowly and humble in our own eyes, and to subdue the delusive idea of our own excellence and worth. For this end, it inculcates self-denial, penitence, contrition, and prayers, all of them the children of humility and self-condemnation. The conception it gives us of the human state is very mortifying. You see already, without further

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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 233

ther' preamble, that politeness whose end it is to make the people we converse with pleased with themselves, is a dangerous commerce, that the beauties of elegance are suspicious and false; and that the haughty dignity assumed by the Greeks and Romans was a radical opposition to Christianity. Here you may behold, open to your view, the rooted and implacable enmity that must necessarily subsist between the spirit of man, and Christianity; between the law of God, that draws our happiness from humility, and the principle that elevates and flatters the human heart. You see Christianity, like a despotic and merciless tyrant, strip off from man all his natural beauty and merit; and you see the reason, why lord Shaftesbury, and other writers who insist on the natural dignity of man, become proportionably enemies to Christianity. When we take into consideration the true prospect of our religion, we know in a moment, why Christian saints, who were

passive

passive and meek sufferers, and were humble and lowly in their own eyes, are improper subjects of tragedy, epic poetry, statuary, or painting; and why modern poets are obliged to bring heathen heroes on the stage, and give their favourite characters the haughty heathen sentiments of virtue; by which means they speciously undermine the principles of Christianity, and debauch the heart, by the beautiful pictures they draw of natural dignity and grandeur of soul.

A. Cruel man! to set all I admire, and all I respect, at war in my breast; to give me a fear and horror of the virtue and dignity I almost adore; to debase Christianity, and to set all that is noble and great in opposition to it. This is surely to seduce me from religion, and make me fling myself for relief on Deism. How much kinder would it be in you, to reconcile religion and the elevating sentiments

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 235

sentiments that give us joy and pleasure in our existence.

D. I might have done so, it is true, and decked out a flattering religion, agreeable to the modern taste; for which almost every one would give me sincere thanks; but then it would not be real Christianity. However, let me observe, that Christianity gives a much finer prospect than it takes away; it only takes away a seducing, false, and painted picture of human excellence; but in exchange, it lifts the curtain of futurity, and shews you a prospect of human glory and beauty, that will never fade, superior to the vile insults of old age, to fortune, tyranny, or the grave. Although the spurious picture of our own virtue gives us more gratification and pride, yet the ideas of Christianity are infinitely more sublime and affecting. The vastest imagination possessed

possessed by any of the human race, that has come to our knowledge, was undoubtedly Homer's; yet when most on fire, how poor and inferior are his ideas of divine power, compared to those of the Scriptures; and it is when he approaches to the Christian ideas, that his conceptions of the Gods are truly divine. The soul of man also, in ruins and depravity, is an object much more noble, and also more affecting than the heathen hero, although not so flattering or beautiful. We all feel a deep sense of our native misery, and the truth breaks in upon us from every quarter; although we hide it like midnight conspirators, and dare not breathe it to our own hearing. It breaks in upon us in the midst of worldly pomp and pride, and appears very conspicuously in the puerile felicity we feel in the false shew of dress, the false dignity, honour, and ease we assume; all of which we know to be counterfeit and deceitful. Nothing discovers
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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 237

the conscious sense we have of our wretchedness more than our eagerness to get it out of view. The deist shews his feeling of guilt, while he fortifies his sensual heart with endless sophisms drawn round it, while he seeks to elude conscience, by arguments evidently snatched up by distress and despair. It is the internal perception of human misery, and of a misgiving conscience, that gives irresistible force to the wild rhapsodies of fanatics. It is in vain to reason with them against a sentiment they really feel and experience; and their discourses are infectious, because all mankind feel just as they do. The fears of superstition are sentiments of the mind, which, like all other instinctive sentiments, cannot be tried at the bar of reason, and yet are better established, and more present than the conclusions of reason. When a horse discovers a lion breaking into the pastures, and moving towards him, he beholds in his form and terrific motions,

evidences of his might and fury, that will not suffer him to hesitate or doubt. If the horse were a modern philosopher, he should, at the sight of an animal so much beneath him in size, await at least, and put his force to a trial, before he drew the shameful conclusion; he should suspect that his dread was a prejudice for want of due examination, and he ought to summon his reason to his assistance. But the horse, by a secret light of sentiment, which cannot be traced or accounted for, but which yet is very just, measures in a moment the power of the lion with his own, without scale or compass, without the laws of mechanics or geometry, and flies by the impression of an internal sense. In like manner the fanatic yields to a sense of his natural misery in his own breast, convicting as fate, although it be without sensible proof, which generally drives him into enthusiasm and predestination for relief. Thus one party of the thoughtful and reflecting, get
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rid of the terrours of Christianity by enthusiasm; another party by philosophy and deism, which are only different shifts of hiding from the same spectre. But the generality of mankind, who are enemies to thought, avoid the very approaches of it in diversion and amusement. When Christianity appeared upon the earth, it was this affrighted sense that took the alarm against it. The world did not regard the gospel as a fable, that deserved contempt, but as a two-edged sword that pierced their bosoms; and accordingly they started up and attacked it, with a deadly hatred, that cannot be attributed to any other cause than uncommon terrour and resentment. You may call religious terrour, as men generally do, by the name of *superstition*, and then it is a human sentiment put into ridicule; and indeed if men had not dreadful terrours in their own bosoms, which they earnestly desire to keep in quiet and repose, they would not discover so much

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resentment as they usually do against the superstitious and scrupulous, who otherwise are only objects of compassion.

It is certain, that Christianity, from the prospect it give us of our corruption and ruin, and the force it receives from our internal sentiments, is capable of more affecting and more sublime oratory, than the heathens were able to conceive; but then it is terrific and unpleasing to human nature, like the sea in storms about a mariner, who, from his little skiff, that every moment seems to be overwhelmed, views the noble dreadful scene; but views it in such anxiety as destroys the beauty.

Christians also ought, by all the rules of theory, to excel the heathens in music, whose religious ideas are so superiorly passionate and noble. It is certain, that Christianity naturally familiarizes us to the great, the affecting, and plaintive passions

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 241

passions that form the epic part of harmony; and it may be asserted with some degree of confidence, that wherever the taste of music is revived, it will assist in awaking the other powers of genius, and impressing the mind with a sublime habit of thinking. In statuary and painting, Christians have no prospect of equalling the heathens. Passion and pride are the very soul of painting; what recourse then has the artist, when he draws the great models of Christianity, whose glory it is to suffer injuries with patience, and to stifle the effects of pride, its revenge, its discontent, its majesty, and haughty port? I before observed, that the spirit of Christianity is not favourable to tragedy; and I believe I may add, that tragedy will never appear in splendor, where men's ideas of human worth and merit are formed from genuine Christianity.

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Since I have spoken of the effects of Christianity on the fine arts, it is not wholly beside my design, to observe, what effect infidelity, which gains ground over all those parts of Europe, where a difference in religion hath obtained, must have on them. From what I have said, it appears pretty evident, that where religion is turned out, there all the arts, and taste itself, must utterly set in darkness and vanish. The heathen religion, however absurd, imparted those noble ideas we find in the heathen works of genius; and religion is so necessary to preserve grandeur of thought, that Lucretius was obliged, in his poetry, to pay his devotions to the gods he annihilated in his arguments. Indeed the sublime cannot subsist without the awful and mighty views of religion: on which account great poets, whatever were their private opinions, were always in their works men of eminent piety. On the contrary, as
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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 243

infidelity advances and chills the enthusiasm of the mind, the divine and noble ideas must perish in poetry, oratory, sculpture, and painting. However enthusiasm be applied, it originally belongs to religion, and must perish where religion is lost : genius therefore, which under Gothic obscurity was only oppressed and overwhelmed, but still struggled, must submit to infidelity, and lie quietly in the grave : Epicurism, or heathen infidelity, came into repute just when the arts fell in Greece and Rome. I should have observed before, that Christianity gives the best prospect of that equality, that constitutes the most valuable part of freedom. Where the greatest possible freedom is enjoyed, there must be in opulent states, a subordination, and the croud must be for ever distressed in their private circumstances : but the christian religion puts all upon a level ; it opens

views of glory to the most wretched, and stamps every soul with infinite value.

But when Amelia appears lost in thought and pensive in reflection, it is time to put an end to the discourse that occasions her concern. I shall only mention in a few words as possible, the result of what we read, and of what we have just now said. There are in the soul original sentiments, which, when man has leisure to turn his attention to them, form his distinguishing character, his genuine taste and judgment: these sentiments, together with the elegant arts they give rise to, and his obstinate affectation of worth and dignity, all discover illustrious marks of regal grandeur in the soul; this beloved grandeur we would fain assume in this life, for, present passion naturally seeks present enjoyment; and while we are delighted with the sublime idea of human nature, we fondly desire that liberty which
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DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 245

is the birthright of innocence: but to confound and humble us, human corruption attends forever, and scourges man back into vile subjection, with the terrors of anarchy, confusion, murders, and insecurity. Society and laws are not the effects of choice, but of bitter necessity, that never suffered any people to remain in a state of freedom, where they had any possessions to be coveted: the stern decree of bondage, along with the inclemencies of life, and its variety of wants and miseries, inform us in the language of the Almighty, that we are ruined, guilty, and condemned; consequently, that our pride and opposition to subjection, are presumption, rebellion, and sin. The heathen religion, which allowed the reality of human rectitude and virtue, and appropriated the enthusiastic views to this life, gave room to genius to work miracles in free states, where the grandeur of human nature became a principle of action.

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But Christianity turns our sublime views from this world to their proper scene, to a future life, and confines the flight and heroism of the mind to devotion, fortitude in suffering, patience, and to a noble conquest of the passions.

M. The fine arts, I am convinced, bear a relation to a state in which we are not at present. I see plainly, although that state be surrounded with clouds, which deny a near view of it, yet that it is a state of amazing rapture and joy, and that the fine arts are indubitable proofs of the unspeakable sublimity of the spirit of man. Upon the whole, the prospect you have given me, I own is great; but it is also melancholy and terrible. I am convinced that the heathen ideas of human virtue and grandeur were false and low; yet they are very engaging, and I quit them with reluctance. I think I am like Eve taking her last leave of the garden of

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Eden,

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 247

Eden, with the whole world in prospect before her, and heaven in her hope. However unbounded her new inheritance, and noble the promises she received, yet she could not forbear looking back with a sigh, and feeling a secret inclination to remain.

THE END,

DISCOURSE ON TASTE. 247

Idem, with the whole world in prospect
before her, and heaven in her hope.
However, her new inheritance,
and nobles the received, yet
the could, looking back with
a sigh, and a former inclination to
remain.



THE END.

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